

**THE TEACHING OF READING FLUENCY SKILLS IN GRADE THREE XITSONGA HOME
LANGUAGE**

by

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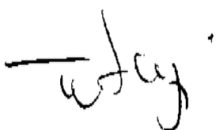
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my sweet mum. Your love for my life was so deep. You have never been to school, but you knew the value of education. You taught me to be independent. You are no longer in this world, but I still cherish your unconditional support throughout my life. Thank you.

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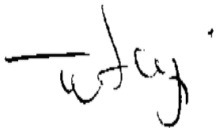
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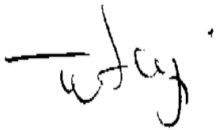
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The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of South Africa's *Code of Ethics for researchers and the policy guidelines for responsible research*.



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
FAL	First Additional Language
ANA	Annual National Assessment
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study
SACMEQ	Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SASA	South African Schools Act
HL	Home Language
RR	Repeated Reading
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
SES	Senior Education Specialist
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
MT	Mother Tongue

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I explored the teaching of reading fluency skills in Grade 3 Xitsonga Home Language (HL). A qualitative research methodology was employed using a phenomenological study design and interpretivism paradigm. Purposive sampling was employed to choose participants. Five (5) Foundation Phase (FP) Departmental Heads (DHs) and five (5) Grade 3 Xitsonga teachers from 5 sampled schools in Hlanganani Central Circuit, Vhembe West, Limpopo Province, making up a total of ten (10) were participants in the study. Data were collected using interviews, observation and document analysis.

The findings from the study revealed that participants used different strategies and methodologies such as modelling reading and repeated reading to teach fluency reading. The participants also used basic teaching reading methods such as phonemic awareness, phonics, syllabication, enlarged reading texts and shared reading with big books to teach reading skills. The NECT document offered lessons on teaching reading, which participants saw as useful and used to scaffold learners reading skills. CAPS too as a curriculum document was seen as important, however participants did not follow it to the latter especially in determining time allocation for reading. Participants used own discretion based on their learners situation of reading capability to allocate time for teaching reading.

Reading fluency challenges can be both intrinsic and extrinsic. The study revealed that if reading methodologies are not taught appropriately, they may lead to fluency reading challenges. If the learner is not motivated to learn, he/she may experience reading challenges which may manifest into reading fluency challenges. Assessing fluent reading must be an integral part of teaching reading fluency. Lack of teaching of reading fluency may affect comprehension. In the Foundation phase the focus is on teaching reading- but this skill must be used to read for learning. Reading comprehension is key to learning other subjects. Without reading fluency and comprehension, the academic journey of a learner may be negatively impacted. Print-rich environment with readers for learners to use during leisure reading time will instill a sense of appreciation for reading, key to the acquisition of reading fluency.

Key terms: Reading, Home Language, Syllabication, Repeated readings, Modelling readings, Extensive Readings, Phonics approach, Fluent reading, Comprehension

NKOMISO

Eka ndzavisiso lowu, ndzi kambisisile madyondziselo ya swikili swa ku hlaya hi nkholuko eka Giredi ya 3 eka Xitsonga ririmi ra le kaya. Vatekaxiave eka dyondzonkulu leyi ku vile 5 wa tinhloko ta swiyenge ta Dyondzo ya Masungulo na vadyondzisi va Xitsonga ririmi ra le kaya va 5 va ka Giredi ya 3 lava humaka eka swikolo swa 5 leswi hlawuriweke eka Sekete ya Hlanganani Central, eVhembe Vupeladyambu, eka Xifundzhankulu xa Limpopo. Madyondziselo ya ndzavisiso wa nkoka wu tirhisiwile eka kambisiso hi maendlelo ya dyondzo ya phenomenoloji. Eka dyondzo leyi, endlelo ra ku sampula hi xikongomelo ri tirhisiwile. Hungunyana ri hlengeletiwile hi ku tirhisa mbulavurisano, ku xiya-xiya na ku hlela matsalwa. Paradini ya inthapreretivizimu ya tirhisiwile eka dyondzo leyi. Nhlayo ya vanhu hinkwavo lava veka na xiave eka ndzavisiso lowu i khume(10), ku katsa 5 wa tinhloko ta swiyenge swa dyondzo ya masungulo na 5 wa vadyondzisi va Xitsonga ririmi ra le kaya eka Giredi ya 3.

Ndzavisiso wu paluxile leswaku vatekaxiave va tirhisile xikili xa mapeletwana ku dyondzisa ku hlaya, swa tirha hikuva vadyondzi vo tala va swi kota ku hlaya ku ya hi giredi ya vona. Vatekaxiave eka ndzavisiso lowu va tirhisa madyondziselo ya ku madyondzisi a hlayela vana, ku hlaya hi ku vuyelela na ku hlaya matsalwa hi ntalo. Madyondziselo ya ku hlaya ku hlaya kun`we, mpfumawulo, ku hlaya hi ku leteriwa swi tirhisiwile na swona. Hi tlhelo rin`wana, mintlhontho ya ku hlaya hi nkholuko yi hlamuseriwile na yona. Ku tsandzeka ku hlaya hi nkholuko swi endla leswaku vadyondzi va tsandzeka ku hlaya xikambelo ntwisiso. Switandzhaku hi leswaku ku tsandzeka ku hlaya hi nkholuko swi nga twisa ku vaviseka eka xikambelo ntwisiso lexi nga eku hlayiweni. Vana va fanele ku rhangwa va tiva mpfumawulo. Loko va nge se twisisa, vadyondzi va fanele ku tiva marito hi ku tirhisa vutivi bya mpfumawulo. Ku hlaya tibuku swi na nkoka leswaku vadyondzi va ti toloveta swikili hi voxwe. Ku tirhisa Xitatimende xa Pholisi ya Kharikhulamu na Makambelelo (XIPHOKHAMA) loko ku dyondzisiwa swi na nkoka. Ku ya hi XIPHOKHAMA vadyondzisi va kuma swiletelo swa madyondziselo leswi va faneleke ku swi landzelela. Ehandle ka swona, swi pfuna vona ku kuma madyondzisele ya ku dyondzisa ku hlaya na ku swi tirhisa masiku hinkwawo. Swi ringanyeto, hi leswaku ndhawu leyi nga fuwa hi matsalwa ya laveka eka dyondzo

ya Dyondzo ya Masungulo. Nakambe, vadyondzi loko va dyondza ku antswa, va fanele va va paluxekile eka switirhisiwa swo hambana hambana endzeni ka tlilasi.

Marito ya nkoka: Ku hlaya, Ririmi ra le kaya, Mapeletwana, Ku hlaya hi ku vuyelela, Ku hlaya ka mudyondzisi, Ku hlaya matsalwa hi ntalo, Madyondziselo ya mpfumawulo, Ku hlaya hi nkholuko, Xikambelo ntwisiso

ISIFINQO

Lolucwaningo lucubungule ukufundiswa kwamakhono okufunda ngokugeleza kubafundi beBanga 3, ngolimi Lwasekhaya lweXitsonga. Kusetshenziswe indlela yocwaningo ebizwa ngeKhwalthethivu egxila ekuqoqeni imibono yabacwaningwayo iyibeke njengokusho kwabo, incikene nenjululwazi ekholelwa ekuhumusheni imibono yabacwaningwayo njengoba injalo. Indlela yokuqoka ngenhloso isetshenzisiwe ukukhetha othisha abayisihlanu (5) izinhloko zomnyango wamabanga aphantsi ezinhlanu (5) abaphuma ezikoleni ezinhlanu (5) ezingaphansi kweHlanganani Central Circuit, Vembe West, Limpopo Province. Indlela yengxoxo namaqembu, ukubuka kufundwa ezindlini zokufundela kanye nokuhlolwa kwemibhalo eqondene kwasetshenziswa ukuthola ulwazi lwalolucwaningo.

Okwatholakala kulolucwaningo kwembula ukuthi ababamba iqhaza kulolucwaningo babesebenzisa izindlela ezahlukene zokufundisa ukufunda sakugeleza. Abacwaningwayo basebenzisa izindlela eziwumgogodla wokufunda njengo kuba Nolwazi lwemisindo, ubudlelwano phakathi kwemisindo nezinhlamvu ezibhalwayo, ikhono lokuhlukanisa izinhlamvu, imibhalo ekhulisiwe kanye nokufunda ngokuhlanganyela. Umqulu we NEC wawunikeza othisha izifundo ezazinosizo okwakumele bazifundise kanjalo nomhlahlandlela obizwa ngo CAPS babewubona uwusizo. Kodwake ababecwaningwa bazwakalisa ukuthi nakuba lemiqulu yayibasiza kepha babengalandeli kahle indlela isikhathi esabiwe ngaso ku CAPS, kwakudinga bazinqumele bona ukuthi ukufunda kuthatha isikhathi esingakanani bebuka izidingo zabafundi.

Lolucwaningo lubuye lwambula uma kungasetshenziswa izindlela ezingqala ukufundisa ukufunda ngokugeleza kungadala izinkinga zokufunda. Uma umfundi engakhuthazwa ukuthi afunde ukufunda angaba nezinkinga zokufunda ngokugeleza. Ukuhlola ukufunda ngokugeleza kubafundi kumele kube yingxenye ebalulekile uma kufundwa ngoba uma kungenzeki ngeke bakwazi ukufunda ngokuqondisisa abafundi. Emabangeni aphantsi kugxilwa ekufundiseni ukufunda ukuze Abafundi bakwazi ukufundela ukwazi. Ukufunda ngokuqondisisa kubalulekile ngeke kwenzeke uma abantwana bengakwazi ukufunda ngokugeleza, lokho okungakhubaza ukufunda

jikelele. Indawo abakuyo Abafundi kumele inothe ngemibhalo njenganezincwadi zezindatshana abangazifunda ngesikhathi sabo futhi bazijabulele.

Amagama Asemqoka: Ukufunda okubhaliwe; Ulimi Lwebele/Lwasekhaya; Ukuhlukanisa amagama ngemisindo yongwaqa; Ukufunda uphindelela okubhaliwe; Ukufundela ukuba izingane zilalele; ukufunda kabanzi; ukufunda sakugeleza; ukufunda ngokuqondisisa.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Reading is essential to a learner's academic, personal and social development, as it is both a process and outcome involving cognitive, social and linguistic comprehension (Bishop & Leonard, 2000; Hay & Field-Barnsley, 2007). An inability to comprehend a written text affects a learner socially and personally. Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) indicate that the international reports based on the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) (2010) and the South African grades marks of the Progress in International Reading (PIRLS) emphasise that South Africa performed unsatisfactorily. Many learners in South Africa are illiterate, and this was verified when local and national tests for educational achievement, namely, the Annual National Assessments (ANA), were conducted (Spaull, 2013). ANA was a battery of standardised tests for grades one to six and nine. The tests proved that many learners in the country are underperforming, relative to the curriculum. The ANA results suggest that the education sector must do something to improve the standard of education in the country. Undoubtedly, ANA provides an opportunity to ensure that interventions are implemented, and these can be targeted to support specific schools or classes. Furthermore, the crisis of reading has not been identified in South Africa only but is a global phenomenon. The study conducted by Azevedo, Goldemberg, Montoya, Nayar, Rogers, Saavedra and Stac (2020) reveals that many children in low and middle-income countries cannot read. Even Muhassin, Annisa and Hidayati (2020) elucidated that many children in Indonesia have reading problems.

Wolf and Katzir-Cohen (2009) state that reading is where a learner can connect chunks of texts quickly, effortlessly, smoothly and accurately with little conscious attention to the mechanics of reading such as decoding and blending. Hence, the current researcher decided to conduct a research project on the teaching of reading fluency skills in Grade three Xitsonga home language (HL) because many Foundation Phase learners struggle to read fluently (Spaull, 2013). According to Rasinski (2004), fluency is when a learner decodes printed texts accurately and effortlessly along with an expressive interpretation of the text. Besides, Wolf and Katzir-Cohen (2009) define fluency as learners' accurate reading of a printed text at a

minimal rate with expression and a deep understanding of the text. Struggling to read fluently has a negative impact on reading comprehension. Many learners in South Africa are unable to master essential primary decoding skills in the lower grades in their home language (Ardington, Wills, Pretorius, Mohohlwane & Menendez, 2021). Infact, reading difficulties may affect the learners' entire schooling and may result in many dropouts in the country.

The South African Schools Act (SASA) (No. 84 of 1996), in sync with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, highlights its fundamental purpose as being to eliminate poverty through the provision of proper education (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2015). Learners need to get a proper education to partake in all educational opportunities in society. Through proper education, learners can take care of themselves through self-empowerment and job creation. According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act no 108 of 1996) as cited in (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2015), education aims to ensure that all citizens have a quality life; it is mandated to fulfil the potential of each person. Therefore, curriculum development and education provision must be harmonised to ensure that the aims of education are achieved throughout the learners' lives. Assertively, this can only be realised when learners can read fluently, according to their grade level, during teaching and learning.

One of the general aims of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for home language (HL) is to confirm that learners acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that would make their own lives meaningful (DoE, 2011). Furthermore, the curriculum provides knowledge in a local context while being sensitive to the global imperatives. In Grade 3, home languages have been allocated more hours for learning, unlike Mathematics, English First Additional Language (EFAL) and Life Skills (DBE, 2011). Each subject has its components. The components of home language are listening and speaking, reading and phonics, and handwriting and writing. Moreover, more time has been allocated to reading, that is, 4 hours 30 minutes per week in the Grade 3 Foundation Phase (DBE, 2011).

Fluent readers read the printed text with prosody and adequate phrasing. This indicates that they understand what they are reading (Rasinski, 2004). They must express themselves by answering the questions posed to them, which indicates that they comprehend the text. However, for Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) learners in this study, fluency is still a yet-to-achieve skill. Learners must be able to respond to oral and written assessments in the form of tasks and assignments. Some Grade 3 learners still struggle to read, which is worrisome as this is

an exit grade to the Intermediate Phase (IP). In the IP, a learner is faced with many subjects and is taught in EFAL. Failure to read will have a notable negative impact on their learning, more so on their inability to read in their home language. Consequently, it will be hard for such a learner to write successfully and proceed to the next grade.

A learner who reads without fluency will find it difficult to engage meaningfully in activities that involve written language. All the factors indicated above call for more research on the teaching of reading fluency skills in basic education. This study sought to proffer possible reading strategies of teaching that could assist learners to read fluently, thus aiming for meticulous achievements in their learning endeavours.

1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The current researcher is a Foundation Phase (FP) teacher and has been teaching for the past 16 years. The researcher is a Departmental Head (DH) in the Foundation Phase. As a DH, the researcher noted a challenge in the teaching of reading in Xitsonga home language at her school. Learners cannot read fluently, which is incongruent with their grade level. Because of the noted challenge, their academic performance is ultimately affected.

According to Cronje (2021) and Combrinck, Van Staden and Roux (2014), many learners in South Africa are lagging behind when it comes to reading and writing. Performance outcomes of the PIRLS that was conducted in 2006 revealed that African language learners, including Xitsonga, in the Foundation Phase performed below twenty percent. Hence, the focus of this research was on Grade 3 Xitsonga home language only.

According to Van Staden and Bosker (2014), failure to read is not a new thing in South Africa. The findings of the research on an entry grade for the Intermediate Phase indicated that learners were still struggling to read with understanding. Learners in Grade 4, for instance, face many subjects, unlike in Grade 3 where they do only four, namely, home language, English First Additional language, Mathematics and Life Skill.

The researcher used the qualitative research design, where she observed the learners and teachers in the classroom during the teaching of reading of Xitsonga (HL). The researcher further engaged Grade 3 5 teachers and 5 Foundation Phase Departmental Heads (DHs) to

find out more about reading strategies and methods that could enhance the reading fluency of Grade 3 Xitsonga home language learners.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.3.1 Definition of reading

Reading entails the ability to process the sense of distinct words from print, their association with other words in a sentence and to establish the complete meaning of the text in which the words and sentences occur (Spaull et al., 2020). According to Michigan in Patterson (2016:2), reading is an act that generates meaning through a dynamic interaction with the reader's prior knowledge, the information offered by the written language, and the circumstances of the reading situation. Reading ability is the combination of decoding, listening and comprehension skills (Phillip, Gough & Treiman, 2017). In the same vein, phonological awareness is crucial for developing a decoding skill whereas comprehension is developed by syntactic awareness. In literacy achievement, there are four skills to attain, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, reading is fundamental and necessary for learners in a classroom context and an extracurricular environment (Ahmadi and Gilakjani, 2012; Suraprajit, 2016). A literacy-rich environment provides a setting that supports foundation skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing (Tyson, 2017). Depending on the grade and subject, elements of a print-rich environment include posters, stories, word walls, labels, literacy stations, writing content and a display of learners' work. There should be displays of books, and information and plenty of opportunities to listen, speak, read and write.

The core matter of reading instruction is for learners to fully understand that the written code represents spoken language accurately so that meaning can be constructed from the text when they read on their own. According to Adams (1977), reading is aimed at translating writing into speech. Being able to read means the knack to reflect on written texts and use these texts as tools for reaching individual and societal goals (Mullis, Martin & Sainsbury, 2016). Greater emphasis is placed on information from reading to develop holistically in all aspects of life. PIRLS, cited in Mullis et al. (2016:11) states that reading literacy is the capacity to understand and make use of written language forms required by society and valued by the individual. According to Gilakjani (2016), reading is to make meaning of the written text. A fluent learner interacts with the text and extracts meaning from it. Therefore, reading fluently

involves comprehending and interpreting the text. Learners read different resources according to their needs. For instance, they may read for information, enjoyment, and personal gain. Likewise, in the Foundation phase, learners who read fluently do so for enjoyment. Readers make meaning of the text by integrating the current knowledge and the information in the print.

According to Rasinski (2004), reading is defined in terms of three components: accuracy, automaticity and prosody. There are also three levels of performance in word decoding accuracy, and these are frustration, instructional and independent levels. Frustration-level readers find the assessment text to be challenging to read, even with assistance from a peer or a teacher. On the other hand, instructional-level readers read the assessment text with assistance from their peers or the teacher whereas the independent-level readers read the text without assistance. Consequently, it was of great importance that the researcher embarked on the research because many Grade 3 learners are on instructional and frustration levels. Hence, the importance of fluency and the factors that influence the teaching of fluency cannot be ignored in this study.

1.3.2 The importance of reading fluency

Pikulski and Chard (2003) cite the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000), which refers to fluency as the ability to read the text rapidly, accurately and with expression. Reading fluency can be defined as accuracy, automaticity and prosody in reading (Kuhn, Schwaneflugel and Meisinger, 2010). Rasinski (2010) cites three components of fluency namely, accuracy in word recognition, automaticity in word recognition and interpretive and meaningful reading. The functions of automaticity and accuracy are critical in the prevention of later difficulties in learners.

Reading is automatic when it is speedy, effortless and automatic. Hudson, Pullen, Holly and Torgesen (2009) indicate that automaticity in reading is about retrieving from memory. For reading to be fluent, it should be smooth, effortless and automatic. Effortlessness is observed when the reader reads the text without a break. and the word is recognised automatically. According to Kuhn et al. (2010), effortlessness indicates that the task is done easily, therefore, when a learner is fluent in reading, such a learner appears not to struggle to do so. Learners who read fluently do not struggle to recognise the words they encounter in the text

and can tell that print words have meaning. They immediately comprehend the text they are reading. Such learners can recognise almost every word they encounter without conscious effort.

Hook and Jones (2004) maintain that automaticity in reading includes the advancement of intense orthographic representation, which permits quick and precise recognition of whole words made of different letter patterns. As a learner becomes familiar with letters, phonemic awareness also develops, therefore, orthographic awareness emerges. Most learners who struggle to read with fluency fail to develop automaticity.

Kuhn et al. (2010) state that automaticity in word recognition is determined by phonemic awareness and decoding skills, but also through an instant recognition of sight words. Besides, Makalela and Fakude (2014) maintain that automaticity happens because of extended practice, where complex texts gradually become automatic. Thus, learners should use decoding strategies such as attaching images to the sight words. Doing so will ensure that reading difficulties encountered in the text by learners are solved successfully. Makalela and Fakude (2014) further argue that reading difficult texts and contexts ultimately becomes easier and more familiar to the learners through repetition, improving fluency. Readers who read widely, at school and at home, expand their vocabulary as they encounter new words and concepts. A habitual practice of reading eventually translates into greater fluency as learners become comfortable with various texts. Developing automaticity in word reading is a prerequisite for reading with understanding. Developing successful silent reading is critical because it is the primary mode of reading for skilled readers. Learners in Grade 3 should master the skill of reading silently as they attain reading fluency. Competent readers typically read faster during silent reading than when reading aloud.

According to Hudson et al. (2009), reading is multifaceted and comprises elements such as decoding fluency, reading fluency and reading comprehension. The process itself is interwoven and works from letter recognition to meaningful sentence construction. Regarding reading fluency, there are word-related processes and meaning-related fluency. The more automatic the learner becomes in word recognition, the more fluent they become in reading. Therefore, a learner must have a sound knowledge of elements of decoding fluency such as phonemic awareness, letter-sound relationship and finally phonographic knowledge. Young-Suk (2015) states that emergent reading skills contribute to word reading fluency, which

influences text reading fluency. Emergent reading skills such as phonological, orthographic, morphological awareness, letter knowledge, vocabulary and rapid automatised naming are linked to word reading fluency skills and text reading fluency.

Prosody becomes possible because of fluency. Learners must read with prosody, which is an appropriate expression or pitch in reading (Kuhn *et al.*, 2010). Prosody expresses the rise and fall of a pitch, rhythm, stress, pausing and the length of certain words and phrases. As learners become fluent readers, they display intonation and pitch like the one used by adults when they read. Fluency reading is displayed by different prosodic patterns, which convey different emotions like happiness, fast speech rate, varying pitch and fast voices.

1.3.3 Factors that contribute to reading fluency

Fluent readers can read printed texts with appropriate expressions or prosody (Rasinski, Kasim & Nageldinger, 2011). Some ways can support learners with reading disabilities, such as repeated reading, peer-mediated instruction, computer-aided practice and combined practice. Learners who cannot read with fluency read fewer texts in the same way, and they put more cognitive effort into identifying individual words than those who read with automaticity.

Repeated reading is a strategy that can help learners acquire fluency. By giving them reading passages that contain simple words to read repeatedly, a level of fluency can be attained. According to Rasinski, Homan and Biggs (2008) and Mastropieni *et al.* (1999), learners come across various levels of reading fluency to become proficient readers. As they repeat the text, their rate, accuracy and reading comprehension are improved. According to Topping (2014), repeated reading enhances reading automaticity. Similarly, Fuchs and Fuchs (2005) maintain that repeated reading is an effective practice for developing reading fluency. Learners read the text aloud to a parent or teacher and then read the passage silently and repeatedly until they reach fluency.

According to Mastropieni *et al.* (1999) in the Report on the NRP (2000), reading fluency is an important component in effective and competent reading. Procedures of reading fluency are linked and related to the measures of reading comprehension. The learner who reads fluently

can comprehend a written text, hence fluency is contemplated along with phonemic awareness, phonics and word decoding, vocabulary and comprehension.

The CAPS document for the Foundation Phase has time allocated for shared reading in HL and FAL (CAPS, 2011). The learners share the text with the teacher and may also pair up with another individual or small group and read orally with them. According to Kuhn (2004), fluent readers can make oral reading sound like spoken language and express an appropriate use of phrasing, pitch and emphasis in their reading. According to Topping (2014), paired reading is another form of supported oral reading that assists learners by reading together and understanding texts above their readability level. A struggling learner reads a text with help from an expert on difficult words to attain a level of fluency. Such an expert can be a peer, parent or teacher. Through this method, those who are more able readers help those who are struggling to read to develop fluency, confidence and better phonic skills. However, the problem with shared reading in schools is that learners chant the text as if in a chorus, which does not develop the skills required to recognise and/or decode the words.

Pendlebury (2009) researched basic access to education. It was found that parents and the community monitor the distribution of learner-teacher support materials in the primary school so that learners can engage in reading activities. For the learner to read fluently, there must be reading resources at school such as story books, big books and charts. There is a need for research on parental involvement. Therefore, parental involvement in the education of the learners is one of the factors that needs to be tackled deeply for the learner to read fluently. According to Kuhn (2005), strategies can be developed that will be beneficial to learners who struggle to read with fluency. Reading materials are very beneficial in helping learners alleviate reading problems. Thus, learners need to be exposed to different kinds of literacy materials such as picture story books, reading books, rhymes and poems.

Rasinsiki, Yildirim and Nageldinger (2011) proffer that fluency can be developed through text lessons. The teacher prepares a short passage for struggling learners. Learners must then gather the appropriate places to phrase the text within the sentences. Phrased reading improves learners' reading fluency. A marked text from the story, poem or informational passage can be presented to the learners, and the teacher should read while they follow silently. A phrased text lesson helps struggling learners develop word recognition, accuracy, and expression and gain proficiency. Lack of phonemic awareness will have an impact on

word recognition. Poor language skills and limited vocabulary or processing skills may be a factor that hinders fluency. According to Adams (1990), skilful reading requires speed and effortlessness as they progress through the written text. A skilful reader automatically translates the spelling of words into pronunciations. Fluent readers process whole phrases and sentences at once. As the phrases become longer and more complex, the demands for speed and fluency also increase.

Adams (1990) states that learners who read with fluency have phonemic awareness. Phonemes are the smaller-than-syllable speech sounds that correspond with the alphabetical letters. Through phonemic awareness, the learner distinguishes one word from the others. Phonemic awareness is essential for the use of spelling-sound correspondence. Learners who write regularly develop an awareness of phonemes and spelling-sound correspondences. Powerful activities to increase learners' fluency skills are vocabulary development, writing skills and conceptual growth. Thus, phonemic lessons must be integrated into reading stories so that learners can use and extend their phonics knowledge in independent reading and increase their fluency.

Parental involvement contributes to reading fluency. Pagan and Senechal (2014) note that the parents who participated in a summer book comprehension assisted their children in reading and developing their vocabulary and reading skills. Learners developed reading strategies to enhance vocabulary and reading fluency. The participants in the study were parents and children. Sadly, orphaned children often lagged behind mainly because some have no guardians to support them. It is a reality that some children come from child-headed families and thus lack a support system. According to Hay et al. (2001), the home environment has an impact on learners' reading fluency. Parents contribute to reading fluency by securing books for learners to read at home. In essence, shared reading with adults at home motivates learners to pay attention to words more than they do to pictures.

Moats (2004) maintains that regarding education in the United States of America, reading instructions help to prevent inarticulacy among learners. The most important priority in a Grade 3 class is not teaching only, but the development of fluency in reading among the learners. This is in line with Speece and Ritchey (2005) who state that the lack of reading fluency among learners affects their acquisition of decoding skills in their first grades.

According to Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016), teachers encounter problems when they teach fluency in comprehension. In this study, factors contributing to low literacy levels and teaching comprehension entailed teachers not developing learners' reading skills that support comprehension fluency. Mudzielwana, Joubert, Phatudi and Hartell (2012) indicate that teachers in South Africa encounter problems in teaching comprehension, hence, Grade 3 results are low when compared to other countries. The teachers must be provided with resources to assist with language teaching, especially comprehension. Learners who read with understanding can answer difficult comprehension questions without complications. Learners lagging behind in reading cannot answer high-order questions. To mitigate the problem, shared reading and paired reading can help with developing the learners' cognitive and reading skills and attempting high-order questions.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) define a theory as a group of logical, associated statements that are offered as an explanation of a phenomenon. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2013) opine that theories assist us in sorting out our world diligently, making sense of it, guiding us on how to behave in it and predicting what might happen next. Theories are formulated to explain, comprehend phenomena, encounter and extend current knowledge. This study adopted Vygotsky's Theory of Children's development (Li, 2019). This theory applied to the study because it allowed teachers to use scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concurrently to support Grade 3 learners who faced difficulties in attaining reading fluency. The ZPD is typically linked to instructional scaffolding, a teaching method considered to help learners (Smagorinsky, 2018).

ZPD is defined by Vygotsky as the learner's ability to complete work with the assistance of people who are more capable in the area requiring development (Malik, 2017; Newman, 2000). According to Vygotsky (1978), a child's cognitive development is intrinsically connected to social experience and interactions with more knowledgeable social associates. The learner does not receive knowledge from the teacher passively but is an active participant in social interaction with other individuals. Initially, the main players in the social context close to children are their parents; and then, teachers and classmates become part of the social context. The learner needs assistance, coaching, questioning and guided participation to

work independently, which must be provided in the form of “scaffolding,” where an adult or a more knowledgeable peer carefully monitors how the child is doing and what support the child needs to be taken to the next level (Newman, 2000). Scaffolding is a process of one-to-one teaching with learners. The type of scaffolding the learner gets from more experienced others will elevate him or her to a new level in life. Reading together makes the learners independent as they learn to read with fluency on their own.

As learners develop confidence, the teacher should know when and how to gradually withdraw support to let the learners develop independently. ZPD affirms that a learner can achieve success in learning when assisted by a more knowledgeable other (Young *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, ZPD is often debated in relation to assisted or scaffolding learning. The formation of ZPD involves assistance with the cognitive structuring of learning tasks and sensitivity to the learners’ current capabilities. It is about the transfer of responsibility of learning from the teacher or the more capable other to the learner. The ZPD is specifically a space between the intellect that a child already has and can be acquired with guided assistance (Malik, 2017). According to Adams (2005), learners need someone to keep them focused and help them engage across reading difficulties, and by doing so, all learners can make progress in reading.

1.5 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Department of Education expects Grade 3 learners in Xitsonga (HL) to read with fluency and expression, (DoE, 2011). Grade 3 learners in Xitsonga (HL) are destined to read aloud, silently, independently and with fluency. Importantly, Grade 3 learners in their home language should read text such as poems, fiction and non-fiction books, electronic texts, articles and newspapers with fluency and expression. In contrast, many South African Grade 3 learners are unable to read fluently and compute at grade-appropriate levels, therefore, they are illiterate and innumerate (Spaull, 2013). If a learner cannot comprehend a written text, they cannot progress to the next grade. According to Prinsloo (2009), reading yields educational and economic empowerment. A literate person has access to socio-economic and political rights; thus, it is of great importance that learners read with fluency.

Prinsloo (2009) noted factors related to home language literacy, which included but were not limited to, access to books, parents’ level of education, reading habits, out-of-school activity,

teaching strategies and classroom practices. In Prinsloo's (2009) study, not all the competencies like language usage, handwriting and writing were evaluated (DBE, 2011). According to Dieltiens and Meny-Gibert (2009), there are dropouts in South African schools. Overcrowded classrooms and a lack of interesting and appropriate books that will grab the imagination of children are some of the reasons children cannot read with fluency. Learners drop out of school because of the poor quality of education that they receive at school. Hence, the present researcher argues that fluency is very important in reading as it has a significant impact on teaching and learning. This research intended to minimise inarticulacy among learners by collecting data from teachers and parents who interacted with the Grade 3 learners consistently. Matters of the curricula were established by Senior Education Specialists (SES) to find out the methodologies and strategies of teaching reading that could be used to improve the quality of reading among Grade 3 learners.

The research focuses solely on Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) learners. Since Grade 3 is an exit grade in the Foundation Phase, learners must be empowered with reading fluency skills to be proficient readers. The problem of reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) is often raised at accountability meetings with the circuit managers, school principals, DHs and senior management teams (SMTs). For instance, at the Hlanganani Central Circuit, it was discovered that the performance in the Foundation Phase, especially in Xitsonga (HL) Grade 3 was low. The low performance was due to factors such as poor language skills, overcrowded classes, limited vocabulary, genetic factors, socio-economic factors, poor teaching, and a lack of fluency skills (Cummings, Dewey, Latiner & Good, 2011). Given that learners who struggle to read in the Foundation Phase are likely to experience continued academic difficulties and increased disciplinary problems, effective reading intervention is required to prevent any difficulties they may encounter. Hence, the study proposed reading strategies that could contribute to fluent reading skills among Grade 3 learners and projected strategies for the teachers on how to develop reading fluency among the sampled learners.

1.6 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research question: Which factors influence the effective teaching of reading fluency in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?

Sub questions:

The sub-questions were:

- *How do teachers implement the CAPS document in their teaching of reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?*
- *How often do Grade 3 teachers use resources in the teaching of reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?*
- *Which methodologies and strategies are understood by teachers in teaching that may contribute towards the attainment of reading fluency in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?*
- *What hinders learners from reading fluently in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?*
- *How do teachers support learners who cannot read fluently in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?*

Aim and objectives:

- The main aim of the study was to explore the factors that influence the effective teaching of reading fluency in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL).

The secondary objectives were to:

- *Investigate the teachers' implementation of the CAPS document in their teaching of reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL).*
- *Investigate if teachers were using relevant resources while teaching reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL).*
- *Investigate if teachers understood and were familiar with the strategies and methodologies of teaching fluent reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL).*
- *Explore factors that hindered reading fluency in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL).*
- *Explore how teachers support learners who cannot read fluently in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL).*

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The following sections highlight the research design and methodology.

1.7.1 Research approach

This study adopted the qualitative approach to address the research problem. The research was empirical; hence the qualitative method design was adopted. Qualitative research

assisted the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study through observation, document analysis and interviews (Queirós, Faria & Almeida, 2017). The main objective of the qualitative approach is to produce detailed and illustrative data to understand the phenomenon under analysis. Every research must involve a clear, well-organised and disciplined approach, to obtain the most appropriate results on a particular research topic. Creswell (2016) indicates that qualitative research studies are conducted by interacting with and observing participants in their natural settings. Grade 3 teachers and Foundation Phase DHs were interviewed to find out how they taught reading fluency in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL). The researcher also observed Grade 3 teachers teaching reading in their classes and how learners read. Furthermore, documents such as CAPS and NECT lesson plans were analysed.

1.7.2 Research design

A research design is a proposal in which the research participants are identified, and data are collected (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). Qualitative research is inductive, and the researcher generally discovers meanings and deep insights into each situation (Mohajani, 2018). There are many designs under qualitative research, including logic, ethnography, participant observation, therapy, grounded theory, biography, comparative method, introspection, focus group, literary criticism, meditation practice and historical research (Creswell, 2007).

According to Kumar (2014), the main goal of the qualitative research design is to understand, explain, discover and clarify the situations of a particular group of people. For this study, the phenomenological research design was adopted. A phenomenological research design is an approach in which a researcher recognises the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by the participants (Cresswell, 2009). Phenomenology scrutinises people's perceptions and understanding of a particular phenomenon. The study design primarily involves the selection of people from whom the information, through an open frame of enquiry, is collected and explored. The researcher collects data in the setting of people who have experienced the phenomenon and develops a description of the essence of the experience for all individuals (Creswell, 2007).

1.7.3 Sampling and population

A population consists of individuals, groups, organisations, human products and events and the conditions from which a researcher will gather data (Welman *et al.*, 2005). The participants in this study were selected from five schools in Limpopo Province, Vhembe West District. The researcher adopted purposive sampling from non-probability sampling. Maree (2014) maintains that purposive sampling is used for a specific purpose. The researcher sampled five primary schools that offer Xitsonga (HL) in Grade 3 for data collection. The researcher selected one DH from each school and one Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) teacher. The total number of participants for this study was ten (10), comprising five (5) Foundation phase DHs and five (5) Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) teachers.

1.7.4 Research sample/site

The sample of this study research comprised 5 DHs and 5 Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) teachers in Hlanganani Central Circuit in Limpopo province, South Africa. I selected 10 participants to obtain in-depth and multiple data related to the participants' experiences of teaching reading fluency to Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) learners.

1.7.5 Data collection methods

The goal of data collection was to gather high-quality evidence that would support extensive data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data collection methods, semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis, were used to gather data for the study.

Interviews

A face-to-face interview with the participants is one of the most used data collection methods in qualitative research (Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, (2016). However, interviews can also be conducted using a telephone or engaging with a focus group (Cresswell, 2009). For this study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 participants from five primary schools. According to Pietila et al. (2016), there are different types of qualitative interviews, namely, structured, semi-structured, open-ended and in-depth interviews with the

participants, and the researcher chose one to collect data, which is, semi-structured interviews.

The teachers were interviewed because they are the core stakeholders who always interact academically with the learners. As the study was conducted during the epidemic of the Coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, all guidelines and health protocols related to the pandemic were observed during the interviews such as the wearing of masks, sanitising and social distancing (Meyiwa, 2020).

Observation

Queirós et al. (2017) state that observation is a process of collecting information, where a researcher observes participants in their setting. The researcher observed five teachers from five schools in a classroom setting during Xitsonga (HL) reading periods and further observed how teachers promoted and taught reading fluency. The researcher intended to identify gaps in teaching reading fluency in Grade 3. Through observation, the researcher noted the strategies and teaching methods used to teach reading fluency. Moreover, the researcher observed the resources used in Grade 3 classrooms and sought to determine if they enhanced fluent reading.

Document analysis

Document analysis refers to a process done to review and evaluate documents related to the study, both printed and electronic (Makieson, Shlonsky & Connolly 2018). This study involved an iterative process of examination through reading, comparing and interpreting of the relevant documents. Documents provided essential background information about the issue and helped the researcher understand the roots of a specific matter that was researched. Documents such as legislation, CAPS documents and NECT lesson plans were reviewed to identify loopholes and make relevant recommendations.

1.7.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is to summarise collected data in terms of common words, phrases, themes and patterns (Maree, 2013). In this qualitative study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews using a recorder as a backup. According to Maxwell (2008), data analysis in qualitative studies can be conducted either during data collection or at the data

analysis stage. Tracy (2013), Maree (2014) and Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) opine that in qualitative studies, data analysis is a continuous and iterative aspect, as data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was employed in this study to make sense of the collected data.

1.8 ISSUES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Elo, Kaarian, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen and Kyngas (2014), trustworthiness is a phrase used to describe the validity of qualitative research. Validity refers to truthfulness (Neuman, 2011). It is about authenticity, which means fair, honest and balanced accounts of social life. Researchers need to adhere to truthfulness and try to create harmony between understandings, ideas and statements of what is happening in a social world. The objective of trustworthiness in a qualitative investigation is to support the claim that the findings of the researchers are credible and deserving of consideration. To employ techniques (Noble and Smith, 2015), the researcher should consider any biases that could affect the results and collaborate with other researchers to lessen the prejudices in their work. According to Maree, (2014), a researcher should use a variety of data collection techniques such as interviews and observation to ensure the validity of their findings.

To evaluate the reliability of qualitative research, options such as dependability, conformability and transferability are utilised (Elo *et al.*, 2014). Issues of credibility, dependability and transferability were discussed in the relevant chapter.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Educational research is essentially about humans. People are used and the researcher is ethically responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of the participants. Issues of harm, danger, privacy and confidentiality should be considered. Participants should sign forms to ensure confidentiality.

1.10 DEFINITION OF TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE STUDY

- 1.10.1 **Reading ability** is the combination of decoding, listening and comprehension skills (Phillip, Gough & Treiman, 2017).
- 1.10.2 **Fluency** is the ability to decode printed texts accurately and effortlessly, along with an expressive interpretation of the text (Rasinski, 2004).
- 1.10.3 **Zone of Proximal Development** is defined by Vygotsky as the learner's ability to complete work with the assistance of people who are more capable in the area requiring development (Malik, 2017; Newman, 2000).
- 1.10.4 **Reading fluency** is defined as the skill of accurately reading a connected text at a conversational rate with appropriate prosody (Torgesen & Hudson, 2006; Pretorius & Lephalala, 2011:12; Kocaarslan, 2017:40; Wolf & Katzir-Cohen, 2001; Fraser, 2017; Rochman, 2017; Geva & Farni, 2011; Elouneh & Karaki, 2021, Ardington *et al.*, 2021)
- 1.10.5 **Accuracy** refers to the learners' ability to recognise or decode words correctly (Torgesen, 2006; Young & Rasinski, 2009).
- 1.10.6 **Repeated reading** means learners read frequently a meaningful passage until a satisfactory level of fluency is reached (Atwater, 2014; Barwasser, Urton, Grünke, Sparling & Coker, 2021).
- 1.10.7 **Automaticity** in word recognition refers to the ability to recognise or decode words not just accurately, but also automatically or effortlessly (Rasinski, 2014).
- 1.10.8 **Prosody** is an inability to read with prosody, that is, with appropriate expression or intonation coupled with phrasing that allows for the preservation of meaning (Kuhn, 2006; Young *et al.*, 2009).
- 1.10.9 **Extensive reading** is encouraging learners to read extensive materials that interest them, developing cognitive skills and improving reading comprehension (Zahri, Anwar & Maruf, 2022).

1.10.10 **Reading comprehension** means a cognitive process of getting meaning from texts and is supported by learners' ability to read the text accurately and fluently (Khan *et al.*, 2018; Solari, Grimm, McIntyre & Denton, 2018).

1.10.11 **Phonemic awareness** is the ability to focus on, differentiate, separate and manipulate phonemes within the pronunciations of words (Ehri, 2022).

1.11 ETHICS CLEARANCE FROM UNISA

The researcher applied for ethics clearance to the Ethics Committee of College of Education. After that, clearance was obtained from the district level and schools. An application in writing for permission to conduct research in schools was sought by the researcher from Limpopo Department of Education. Besides, the researcher sought permission to conduct research from Hlanganani Central Circuit as well as from the principals of the schools in which the research was conducted. Lastly, the researcher offered the participants consent forms to indicate their voluntary participation in the study. The participants were kept safe from any form of harm that might have been triggered by their participation in the study. The nature and objectives of the study were discussed, including that participation in the study was voluntary. The participants were aware that they could withdraw from participation whenever they did not feel comfortable. The researcher also assured the participants that their confidentiality would not be invaded in any way during the study. The participants were also informed that their personal information would be treated with utmost confidentiality and obscurity. To ensure confidentiality, their names, telephone numbers and other personal details were not required in the interview documents.

1.12 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The dissertation has been outlined as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and overview

The background of the study was provided in this chapter. It also included the background of the setting on which the study focused. It further presented the problem statement, research objectives and methods of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

This chapter reflected on research worldwide, in South Africa, and discussed literature on reading fluency.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

The research design and methodology that were used in the research were discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Presentation of findings and analysis of data

Data collected during the study were presented and analysed in this chapter. The chapter entailed the analysis of interviews with and observation of the participants.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter concluded the study given its achievement of the research objectives. Recommendations that could assist in addressing the identified problem of the study were made in this chapter.

1.13 TIMEFRAME

The study was expected to be concluded within 18 months from the approval of the research proposal. However, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, unforeseen delays occurred, resulting in the duration required for the completion of the study being extended.

1.14 CONCLUSION

The current chapter deliberated on the rationale of the study, importance of reading, theoretical framework, problem statement, research questions and objectives, sampling and population, research site, data collection methods, issues of trustfulness, definition and chapter outline.

The next chapter explored the literature review and theoretical frameworks.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the importance of reading fluency and the reasons behind fluent reading. The term “fluency” is originally taken from the word ‘flow’ (Balhinez & Shaull, 2019). Fluency is defined as the smooth and effortless construction of speech and pronunciation in reading. Various authors outline reading fluency as the skill of reading accurately a connected text at a conversational rate with suitable prosody (Torgesen & Hudson, 2006; Pretorius & Lephala, 2011:12; Kocaarslan, 2017:40; Wolf and Katzir-Cohen, 2001; Fraser, 2017; Rochman, 2017; Geva & Farni, 2011; Elouneh & Karaki, 2021; Ardington *et al.*, 2021). It is the ability to read the text quickly and accurately. On the other hand, oral reading fluency is defined as accuracy and rate in a connected text or correct words per minute (Roehrig, Petscher, Nettles, Hudson & Torgesen, 2007; Hudson, Lanne & Pullen, 2005). Besides, Rasinski (2014) defines reading fluency to be automatic in word recognition and expression in oral reading that reflects the meaning of the text.

Fluent readers sound like natural speech in their reading (Young & Rasinski, 2009). Reading fluency means reading in an effortless flowing manner. The prosodic features of oral reading, the rise and falls of pitch, the rhythm and deep concentration placed on certain syllables, words, and phrases and the pausing between words while reading aloud determine the reading aspect of fluency (Schwanenflugel & Benjamin, 2016). A fluent reader makes reading effortless, recognises words and reads automatically. Learners who automatically and accurately recognise words during reading apply much of their cognitive strength to a higher level of cognitive processes such as comprehending the text.

The chapter interrogated contexts where fluent reading has been taught and what the results have been. Reading comprehension refers to the ability of the reader to process text, understand its meaning and integrate it with what they already know. The chapter explored the diverse perspectives on factors impacting on the effectiveness of teaching reading fluency skills in the home language to Grade 3 learners. The subsequent literature review discussed studies conducted on reading fluency in South Africa and globally. It drew the theoretical framework of Vygotsky’s Theory of Child Development by deploying the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted Vygotsky's Theory of Child Development. A theoretical framework is an idea that explains relationships among phenomena to support the theory of research (Kivunja, 2018). It is like a roadmap that a researcher can use to develop arguments and support, rationale, problem statement, aims, research questions and the findings of the study. The study also deployed Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Mylnikova, Shah and Rashid (2022), ZPD is viewed as the difference between what a learner can do without a teacher's assistance and what such a learner can achieve with the guidance of a teacher. The ZPD of the learner can develop through the involvement of a more capable other (Silalahi, 2019; Malik, 2027). A learner can do what they can with the assistance of a more capable other. The teacher is a mentor who shapes in a learner a complex of components required for acquired knowledge. The teacher models a skill to a learner, which further helps a learner to work independently. ZPD is about a relationship of scaffolding between a teacher and a learner. Scaffolding happens between a more knowledgeable mentor and a mentee. It is the responsibility of a teacher to pinpoint and map out the goals of education.

According to Qin (2022), ZPD is about processing the functions that are not yet mature but are already in the process of maturation. This research focused on the teaching of reading fluency skills, as learners are often unable to read with fluency without the assistance of the teacher. The learners who face difficulty in reading need someone to help them reach fluency. The teacher needs to provide the right scaffolding at the right moment to take the learner to the next level. The teacher also needs to assess if the scaffold is appropriate and needs modifying. Thus, the teacher ought to know the appropriate skills, methodologies and strategies that can help a learner read fluently. According to Young et al. (2015), scaffolding helps learners to work responsibly in their learning and become independent. Thus, scaffolding is assistance given in the process of helping a learner develop the ZPD. In a learning and teaching scenario, the teacher's effort is geared towards helping a learner to succeed, hence the teaching of reading fluency skills assists the learners to become fluent and independent readers.

Scaffolding instruction emphasises the "zone of proximal development" as the space-time of teachers' intervention; it refers to teaching and learning inside the "zone of proximal

development". The ZPD is that critical space where a learner cannot understand learning on their own but has the potential to do so through the proximal interaction with an adult or peer; the more knowledgeable other (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2009). To reach a high fluency level, a learner needs interaction with a teacher where they read together. Another assistive person can be a parent, peer, teacher or mentor, who is more knowledgeable and acts as a mediator between the familiar and the unfamiliar. The teacher and the learner sit together with a copy of the same text. The teacher reads aloud with an appropriate expression and intonation. The dialogue reading strategy promotes language development and scaffolding between the adult and the child. Reading together supports reading fluency, which comprises accuracy, automaticity and prosody. The ZPD challenges the learner to develop fluency and rise to a high level of understanding through the mediation of a teacher. Vygotsky uses ZPD to describe that the learner can move from the current or actual level of development to attain the next level by mediating with a capable adult (Shabani, Khatib & Ebadi, 2010). Learners can reach fluency by reading together with a more knowledgeable teacher who will scaffold the reading intervention for them. Moreover, research done by Bano, Jabeen and Qutoshi (2018) reveals that learners can read fluently with expression if parents share reading with them.

On the other hand, there is a psycholinguistic grain size theory that places stress on the advancement and use of different sizes across languages. Ziegler and Goswami (2005) state that the psycholinguistic grain size theory recommends that readers with deep orthographies like English develop regular dependence on large units, whereas languages of transparent orthographies hinge on smaller units. Learners in transparent orthographies master syllable-level skills more easily. However, some languages show a high level of syllable awareness before mastery teaching of reading, and some have a simple syllable structure such as a consonant-vowel (CV) structure.

The consistency of spelling to sound differs across orthographies, as some languages have one letter cluster that has multiple pronunciations, whereas in others, it is always the same way (Ziegler & Goswami, 2005). Syllables in Xitsonga remain consistent in pronunciation. For example, rhwala, lahla, famba, (carry, throw, go). The grapheme `a' produces the same pronunciation. Reading acquisition becomes quick where there is a consistent letter-sound relationship. Smaller grain size tends to be more consistent than large grain size. In learners with consistent orthographies, reading acquisition is quicker than those with inconsistent

orthographies. Learners learning to read in orthographically consistent language use small grain sizes and are unaffected by blocking manipulation by grain size. Moreover, in alphabetic orthographies, the teacher deals with grain size from the single letters. The learner is assisted by someone more knowledgeable to reach ZPD. The learner is taught letter-sound correspondence. Small grain size teaching works with consistent letter-sound correspondence.

In this chapter, the challenges and strengths in the international and African countries' literature were used to situate the findings within the South African context. A brief description of the mother tongue (MT) was provided, as the study was conducted with a particular focus on Xitsonga mother tongue. Luckily, MT instruction in South African education is recommended by the Language in Education Policy (LIEP) (1997) for early formal classes.

2.3 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CAPS DOCUMENT

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) home language for Foundation Phase Grade R-3 has been derived from the Revised National Curriculum Statement and a national curriculum of all South African schools (DoE, 2011). One of the general aims of the CAPS document is the impartation of knowledge, skills and values worth to be learnt in South African schools. It aims to provide quality education to all citizens. South Africa has twelve official languages, namely, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu and Sign language (Constitution, Act No. 108 of 1996). Mokibelo (2016) states that South Africa presents a good example of language policy with twelve local languages used in various situations. Section 29(2) of the Bill of Rights, which is part of the South African Constitution, is undisputable in its stipulation of the right of all citizens to receive education in the official language(s) of their choice in public education institutions, (Act No. 108 of 1996). Section 6(1) affords an official status to 11 languages, 9 of which are indigenous African languages (Mkhize & Balfour, 2017). According to Makumbila and Rowland (2016), the South African education system policy for the Foundation Phase states that learners should receive teaching and learning in their native languages. Learners in Grade 3 use home language, therefore, they are expected to read independently at a more complex level for enjoyment or information from a variety of available texts: magazines, articles and comics, simple fiction and non-fiction books (DoE, 2011). Most schools in South

Africa offer MT instruction in the Foundation Phase, Grades R-3 (Taylor & Coetzee, 2013; Spaul, 2016).

2.3.1 Advantages of teaching in a home language

Mother Tongue or Home Language is a language which is used at home or by many people in an area (Begi, 2014; Piper, Zuilkowski and Ong'ele, 2016). It is the language which learners use at home to express themselves before they go to a formal school. However, in some areas, the MT may not be the catchment language because of different ethnicities in a particular area. Many people can use the same language in an area while some minority groups use their languages. The children of the minority group will use the language of the catchment area as the MT. According to Lonyangapuo (2016), learners achieve better when they are instructed the MT. The use of the MT makes learning effective and meaningful. Learners who develop strong home language literacy skills will easily acquire a second language and beyond.

According to Begi (2014), the advantages of using a home language as the medium of instruction include helping learners improve good interpersonal skills and lay a good foundation for learning other languages. It also develops learners' communication skills when they argue and debate in their languages. The MT improves an understanding of concepts taught in class as learners use the language that they are accustomed to and communicate freely without hurdles. The use of a home language facilitates a smooth transition from home to pre-primary school and then to primary school. The use of the MT makes it easier for the parents to become part of the education of their children, especially at a low education level, as they will be able to understand the content (Gacheche, 2010; Piper *et al.*, 2016). The use of learners' MT as the medium of instruction promotes learners' achievement, improves academic performance and leads to better learning as instruction will be very clear. Teaching in the MT promotes literacy learning and knowledge acquisition among the Foundation Phase learners (Piper & Zuilkowski, 2019). The language used at home and school is very critical for learner achievement at school. Using the learners' MT to introduce reading is more effective in improving children's literacy skills (Mwoma, 2018). If learners use the same language at home and school, learning becomes meaningful as the learners can link the known to the unknown.

Akelloa, Timmermanc and Namusisid (2017) aver that the use of the MT allows teachers and learners to interact naturally and negotiate meanings together, thus creating a conducive learning environment for cognitive and linguistic development. According to Trudell (2016), the MT in the classroom promotes participation, boosts confidence, decreases dropout rates and intensifies the involvement of family and the community in the child's learning as they can engage easily with the teachers using the language, they are familiar with. Furthermore, using the MT enhances the child's cognitive learning processes because teaching and learning is carried out in a language a learner speaks thus making teaching and learning meaningful. Talents are discovered and uncovered when learners understand what they are doing (Mokibelo, 2016). The use of the learners' MT as the language of learning and teaching raises their academic achievement (Piper *et al.*, 2016). The longer a child is taught in the MT, the greater their achievement, as they would be learning in a language that they understand most. Consequently, it will be easier for the learners to become fluent readers.

Many countries in Africa have many indigenous languages, which makes it difficult to find a common language of learning and teaching in primary schools (Piper, Zuilkowski, Kwayumba & Oyanga, 2018; Mose & Kaschula, 2019). Researchers from all around the world have accumulated evidence which shows that learners learn more easily in their home language, which makes learning in other languages easier because the abilities they developed in that language will be transferred to the second language. According to the study by Mose *et al.* (2019), there are many languages spoken in Kenya, and the government's language of instruction policy mandates that learners be taught in the language of the catchment area through Grade 3. Nevertheless, the implementation of the policy does not ensure that learners will definitely learn in his/ her home language, especially in urban areas due to multilingualism.

2.4 COMPONENTS OF ORAL READING FLUENCY

Reading fluency is defined as a learner's inability to decode and comprehend a text accurately, automatically and with expression, (Roehrig *et al.*, 2007; Reutzel & Juth, 2014; Piper & Zuilkowski, 2016; Rasinski, Rupley, Paige & Nicholas, 2016; Hudson *et al.*, 2005; Kang & Shin, 2020).

2.4.1 Accuracy

Accuracy refers to the learners' ability to recognise or decode words correctly (Torgesen, 2006; Young & Rasinski, 2009). It is a strong understanding of alphabetical principles and the ability to segment and blend sounds. Text reading fluency is a mediator between word reading and reading comprehension (Kim & Wagner, 2015). A learner masters word reading first, and this results in the enablement of reading comprehension. Accurate word decoding is a foundation of competence for reading automatically, which is another component of fluent reading. Word reading accuracy comes before text reading fluency. Accuracy and fluency are closely related and thus inseparable (Rochman, 2017). The learner reads words with accuracy and fluency before attempting to read a text. Text reading fluency also depends on learners' language comprehension. Word reading proficiency and listening comprehension enhance text-reading fluency. In fact, word reading, and text reading fluency are related. Learners who read fluently with acceptable speed recognise words automatically. They can read aloud with good prosody or expression, using appropriate phrasing and intonation, and their oral reading reflects their spoken language (Rasinski *et al.*, 2016). They also exhibit accuracy in decoding support comprehension (Wisennach, 2019).

Comprehension depends almost entirely on the components of decoding aspects such as phonemic awareness, letter and vocabulary knowledge (Paris & Hamilton, 2011:47). Accuracy and automaticity are the central components of reading fluency because they are associated with comprehension (Roehrig *et al.*, 2007). A fluent reader reads with accuracy and automaticity and is thus able to comprehend what they are reading. As learners' ability to decode words intensifies, their ability to read words quickly or automatically also improves (Rasinski, 2016). Word recognition plays a crucial role in successful reading comprehension (Ji & Baek, 2018). Moreover, word recognition is the ability to recognise and read rapidly and correctly (Adams, 1990). A lack of successful word recognition accuracy and automaticity can be a barrier that hinders progression to a level of reading for meaningful learning (Rasinski *et al.*, 2016:164).

2.4.2 Automaticity

Automaticity in word recognition is the ability to recognise or decode words accurately, automatically or effortlessly (Rasinski, 2014). This helps learners use their finite cognitive

resources to attend to meaning while reading (Young *et al.*, 2009). Automaticity in word recognition is the ability to quickly recognise words with little effort and attention. It is achieved when children learn or memorise specific words (Roembke, Hazeltine, Reed & McMurray, 2019). It happens when learners read words and decode them fluently which is crucial for fluent reading. Automaticity is the ability to be fluent in word identification (Rasinski *et al.*, 2016). Automaticity and efficiency are more accurate terms to describe the accuracy and rate of reading in or out of context (Kim, 2015). In oral reading, fluency and automaticity are important dynamics in the development of reading comprehension skills (Piper & Zuilkowski, 2016). Thus, oral reading fluency has been linked to comprehension, the goal of literacy development (Piper & Zuilkowski, 2015:156).

Torgesen (2006) states that well-practised words are recognised automatically. It means that word recognition happens very quickly and without effort. The automaticity in which a learner recognises words is important in attaining word reading accuracy. Learners need to develop to read automatically, as such, that they recognise words quickly, accurately, and effortlessly before they elevate to a higher level and complex text. Kuhn *et al.* (2006) argue that reading is considered automatic when it possesses four elements: speed, effortlessness, autonomy and a lack of conscious awareness. Reading speed is closely associated with the readers' automaticity of word recognition in text. Speed is the first attribute of automaticity. It is believed to take place simultaneously with accuracy as learners read fluently. As automaticity in reading develops, learners' performance becomes more accurate and faster. Reading speed provides information about the extent to which words are automatically recognised. The second element of automaticity is effortlessness. It refers to the simplicity with which a task is performed and to the ability to carry out a second task while carrying out the first, automatic one (Kuhn *et al.*, 2006:235). Effortlessness indicates that learners do not struggle to read the words they encounter in the text, they read automatically, effortlessly and fluently. A fluent reader reads in an effortless, flowing manner, without being confused (Rochman, 2017). In addition, most fluent readers not only decode texts but also concurrently read the text with comprehension.

The third attribute of automaticity is being autonomous (Kuhn, 2006). Autonomous reading means that reading occurs without intention. Fluent readers recognise words they encounter without intentionally doing so. Autonomous processing of words comes in early in the development of reading even before the learner becomes fluent. The final attribute of

automaticity is a lack of conscious awareness. As soon as a lower level of word recognition skills becomes automatic, the conscious awareness of the subskills that comprise them disappears (Kuhn *et al.*, 2006). A lack of conscious awareness in word recognition distinguishes fluent from non-fluent readers. Non-fluent readers are likely to be intensely aware of the steps they need to undertake to determine the words in a text and find the process to be slow and deliberate (Chall, 1996). On the other hand, word recognition is automatic for fluent readers, and they can identify nearly every word they encounter without conscious effort.

2.4.3 Prosody

A third critical component of reading fluency is the ability to read with prosody, that is, with appropriate expression or intonation, coupled with phrasing that allows for the preservation of meaning (Kuhn, 2006; Young *et al.*, 2009). The prosodic structures are pitch, stress patterns and duration that contribute to the expressive reading of a text (Torgesen, 2006). When these features are present in reading, the reader is prosodic, meaning that they read with expression. Prosody is a reading skill that includes reading smoothly with appropriate expression and meaning units. Prosody is the ability to perceive indications about duration, intensity, pitch and pausing, to enable the fluent reader to read with appropriate expression (Nash & Arciuli, 2014). Prosody portrays the rise and fall of a pitch, rhythm and stress, the pausing, lengthening, and elision surrounding certain words and phrases that are found in the pool of linguistic communication (Hirschberg, 2002). The ability to decode a word accurately with automaticity comes before learners can read with prosody. On the other hand, word decoding is defined as the skill of producing an accurate phonological representation of each word. Prosody is the hallmark of attainment of fluency in reading and meaningful comprehension. Through prosody, readers boost their comprehension by using various prosodic elements such as volume, pitch and phrasing, to expand on the meaning. The teacher must model good prosodic reading where learners read with expression.

In addition, through expressiveness, fluent readers make reading sound like spoken language (Kuhn, 2004). Reading fluency results in extensive prosodic variability and learners make prosodic distinctions to show that they comprehend the text. Good oral reading prosody leads to fluent reading. Appropriate phrasing, intonation and stress indicate that a learner is a fluent reader and that the learner understands the text being read. Punctuation serves as a focal

visual cue to sentence structure-related prosody (Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2008). A reader who has prosodic awareness reads with correct grammatical punctuation. They know where to pause and continue reading with fluency. Fluency and prosody are indistinguishably linked to comprehension. Assertively, prosody helps learners understand the meaning of the passage they are reading.

2.4.4 The importance of fluent reading

The ability to read fluently is considered important in societies that are rich in knowledge and information and in a world that provides specific job opportunities for people who cannot read, write or do not read (Elouneh & Karaki, 2021). The future of learners, their academic performance and their careers are closely related to their ability to read well. Different studies were conducted to uncover and address challenges relating to factors impacting on the effective teaching of reading skills in the home language in Grade 3, for example, in Northern Sotho (Wilsenach, 2019) and fostering word fluency of struggling readers from Germany (Barwasser, Urton, Grünke, Sperling & Coker, 2021). The study conducted by Wilsenach, (2019) reveals that Northern Sotho learners in Grade 3 have better syllable awareness than phoneme awareness. Phoneme awareness is a better predictor of reading skills for syllable awareness in Northern Sotho. Phoneme awareness must be taught using a systematic phonic approach in Northern Sotho. On the other hand, the study conducted by Barwasser *et al.*, (2021) provided an input to support learners who are struggling to read basic reading skills. Learners face reading challenges as a result of a lack of resources and the absence of teaching methods that are valid, easy to apply and suitable for meeting the needs of different individuals.

Fluency in reading is essential for the development of more challenging academic abilities in higher grades (Balhinez & Shaul, 2019). As learners proceed to higher grades, they need to be fluent to understand more challenging and more complex texts that they will encounter in different subjects. The learner's ability to read with accuracy, speed and prosody plays an important role in becoming a good and fluent reader (Atwater, 2014). The goal of fluency is to read at a normal pace when speaking while comprehending what is being read. To be successful in life, learners need to be fluent readers. Fluent readers sound virtuous, are easy to listen to and read with feelings, enabling the listeners to understand and enjoy what is being read (Rasinski, 2008). They can read and comprehend a text simultaneously. Fluent

readers decode words accurately and automatically (Rasinski, 2008). Learners need to recognise words instantly and accurately on sight. Fluent readers read with ease and accuracy, with expression and word recognition (Zavala & Cuevas, 2019).

Reading is an essential component of language learning and lifelong learning for all learners. It is an important skill in acquiring experience that connects diverse kinds of people in a way far beyond distance or time (January 2018). Through reading, learners attain a deeper understanding of themselves and other human beings in the world. Reading about a variety of topics increases creativity and builds knowledge about the world (Ross, 2017). Reading is a substantial lifestyle, which must be considered by the learners to cope with new knowledge in a changing world.

Kuhn (2020) elucidated that fluency development is important because it assists learners move from slow and deliberate word decoding to automatic word recognition. Moreover, it allows readers to use prosodic elements in the text. For most learners, fluency happens after the establishment of basic decoding skills in the first grade. Fluency is a fundamental element of skilful and meaningful reading (Rasinski, 2014). Fluent readers read automatically and effortlessly. Reading makes way for a better comprehension of one's own experiences, and it can be an exciting voyage to self-contrivance. Once a learner comprehends the skill of reading, especially books such as novels or other kinds of fiction, they can be more imaginative. Reading for pleasure also dispels boredom and distress, especially when one is reading materials such as novels or others that can make one feel relaxed and entertained (January, 2018). The reading resources should be enjoyable and fit the learners' capacity to understand them. For example, there should be a reading corner in the Foundation Phase classes where learners are rewarded with fiction and non-fiction books, comics and newspapers to improve their reading skills and reading for enjoyment, as reading improves vocabulary and develops language fluency.

Fluency develops from reading practice (Yovanoff, Duesbery, Alonzo and Tindal, 2005). As learners practise reading at home and in school, they develop fluency. Learners must get enough time to practise reading aloud, read silently or participate in shared reading to develop reading fluency. Fluency connects the alphabetic principles and consolidates phones and graphemes (Yovanoff *et al.*, 2005). It reflects the integration of skills as learners move from letters to sound words, phrases and sentences. Once learners become skilled with this

integration, they make reading more proficient. Sound knowledge of individual words is vital as learners interact with more complex texts. Fluency increases with consistent effort, which also exposes the reader to an extended vocabulary.

2.4.5 Reading fluency intervention strategies

According to Stevens et al. (2016), fluency intervention refers to any intervention that addresses learners' speed, automaticity, accuracy and prosody when reading texts. There are reading fluency intervention strategies, namely, repeated reading of a text, extensive reading and modelled reading (Atwater, 2014; Young *et al.*, 2009; Guthrie, 2017).

2.4.5.1 Modelled reading

Stevens et al. (2016) argue that teacher modelling is a profound fluency intervention that can be used to enhance fluency. Reading aloud to learners enhances fluency (Piluski & Chard, 2006; Rochman, 2017). Reading aloud is one of the strategies used in the Foundation Phase to practise reading (Mzimane & Mantlana, 2017). In reading aloud, a storybook or a reading passage is read three times in various ways and learners answer the questions. During the first reading, teachers introduce the problem of the story and make comments by asking a few questions. In the second read, key vocabulary is explained. The second read provides enriched vocabulary explanations and clarification of questions. In the third read, there is rebuilding of the story in which learners recount information as well as provide explanations.

The teacher reads the story aloud to the whole class and learners listen with interest (DoE, 2008:26). The teacher models reading to the whole class. Many foundation skills are built through reading aloud, as the teacher models reading to the whole class. The text must be related to the learners' reading level. Reading aloud builds motivation, curiosity and memory. Furthermore, the teacher introduces vocabulary, exposes learners to a variety of texts and helps learners to delight in the pleasure of reading. Modelling reading helps learners focus on reading passages before they read independently. However, reading aloud needs to be supplemented with ways in which learners will interact with text.

2.4.5.2 Repeated reading (RR)

RR means learners read a meaningful passage until a satisfactory level of fluency is maintained (Atwater, 2014; Barwasser, Urton, Grünke, Sperling & Coker, 2021). According to Riquelme, Roca and Yvette (2017) and Stevens et al. (2016), RR is a fluency practice of reading texts repeatedly until a learner can do so easily, effortlessly and fluently. It is effective in the development of learners' fluency. Learners read the passages on their instructional level several times. To develop fluency effectively through repeated readings, a model reader reads the passage, provides feedback and supports the learner after reading the passage. It leads to increased skills in decoding accurately and effortlessly. In addition, it improves word recognition skills and comprehension abilities. RR gives learners the possibility of transferring fluency to an un-practised passage (Riquelme *et al.*, 2017). RR is the best approach to develop fluency (Rasinski, 2006) whereas Steven et al. (2016) contend that repeated reading interventions improve reading fluency and comprehension. Through RR, learners can decode correctly and effortlessly and put words together into meaningful phrases.

Some approaches can be used to develop fluency in young readers. RR is an effective method for increasing learners' oral fluency (Atwater, 2014). Repeated oral reading of texts, alongside fluent reading, as well as supporting learners while reading orally by reading with them, have been identified as key methods for teaching reading fluency (Rasinski, 2006; Rasinski, 2016). In repeated oral readings, learners read texts several times until they can read with a certain degree of fluency. RR instructions are aimed at improving word recognition and automaticity. RR is meant to enhance a reading rate as the goal for fluency instructions. According to Atwater (2014), repeated readings have a strong correlation with increased fluency in struggling readers. RR helps learners to comprehend what they are reading, and it also increases their vocabulary. In addition, it builds fluency and develops decoding skills, and the practice improves prosody while also developing learners' motivation and reading confidence (Monobe, Bintz & McTeer, 2017).

RR instructions are used mostly in theatre, poetry and other performances. Moreover, another variation on repeated readings that is effective for fluency is Reader's Theatre, (Rowley, 2015). This form of RR happens with a script. Learners are given parts to practise and publicly read. Reading programmes and Reader's Theatre scripts and poetry result in a higher reading rate. The text makes significant greater gains in reading rate. RR may lead to

greater improvements in vocabulary and comprehension. The more learners read the more vocabulary they attain. Fluent reading is stimulated by regular opportunities to practise familiar texts and constant exposure to words (Rochman, 2017). In the classroom, learners need to be exposed to print by creating a print-rich environment such as a word wall through flashcards and sentence cards. RR with contingent rewards for rapid reading is another strategy that can develop fluency, (Szadokierski, Burns & McComas, 2017).

2.4.5.3 Extensive reading

According to Piluski et al. (2005) and Rochman (2017), fluency is achieved by extensive reading. The broad use of an oral reading text eases encoding and retrieval of a range of related prints. It contributes to improved oral reading fluency. Learners can benefit more from reading texts that are beyond their instructional level (Kuhn *et al.*, 2006). It can be achieved by providing feedback to learners and modelling reading. Learners who are engaged in silent independent reading stand a greater chance of gaining fluency. The amount of reading learners do out of school is related to reading fluency. Automatic word recognition is achieved through extensive reading of a connected text (Kuhn, 2004). The more learners read in school or out of school, the more they increase fluency. Learners need quality time to read independently at home and school.

The quality of reading books and a variety of reading materials such as comics, newspapers, novels and big books for Foundation Phase learners are necessities for Grade 3 learners to be able to read with comprehension. In addition, learners need to be exposed to trade books, informational texts and basal reading texts or literature anthologies. Reading richer texts exposes learners to a wider variety and volume of words that help them develop decoding and comprehension skills (Kuhn *et al.*, 2006). In class, learners who finish work quickly must be rewarded accordingly by reading books. Moreover, fluency is acquired when learners are exposed to many written texts repeatedly. Word recognition and prosody are achieved through repeated reading. According to January (2018), extensive reading promotes fluency and leads to independent reading. In extensive reading, learners read for information or pleasure. The material must be enjoyable, and suit learners' age and cognitive level, for example, novels, magazines, comics, newspapers and other kinds of literature.

Some learners become fluent readers by themselves by being exposed to reading materials. Exposure to a wide range of reading materials at home and school becomes part of their lives. They must be exposed to reading materials at an early age like story books, listening to stories and being surrounded by people who read and write (Phajane & Mokhele, 2013; Bano *et al.*, 2018). All learners, regardless of their background and socio-economic factors, need to be exposed to a print-rich environment (Tayob & Moonsay, 2018). A learner who has less exposure to a print environment is likely to be prone to reading difficulty. Exposure to print-rich environments in the form of books, comics, puzzles and games encourages learners' language and literacy skills development. Learners should be given support and opportunity to discover learning in an environment that is rich in print. As learners begin to learn to read, they make sense of the words they see in print (Sampson & Condry, 2016). As beginners in reading, learners must make sense of the words they see in print. A print-rich environment is very important in Foundation Phases classes because learners learn by seeing. According to Mzimane and Mantlana (2017), learners must be exposed to books so that they can develop inquisitiveness and be motivated to read.

Teachers must be thoroughly prepared when they get into the classroom. According to Mwona (2017), the teacher should develop teaching and learning materials that will enhance reading in the class. Mwoma (2017) carried out a study in rural public primary schools in Narok County, Kenya, focusing on the ability of children to read. The findings indicated that the availability of reading materials both at home and school is essential in promoting children's reading. All resources that help to promote reading should be available such as literacy textbooks, story books, charts and flash cards. The lower primary classes should be rich in print. The wall must be print-rich with vocabulary words and phonics. Print enhances reading skills and promotes accidental reading; thus Grade 3 learners should be exposed to a variety of print materials to enhance reading fluency as well (Ngurei, Mwoma & Buna, 2019; Ngure *et al.*, 2019).

A quality literacy environment provides many opportunities and literacy development is linked to good acquisition of reading skills. A literacy-rich environment classroom stimulates learners to participate in language and literacy activities with enthusiasm. In totality, learning materials prompt the level of reading skills among the learners. Learners need prescribed grade books and interesting story or poem books to promote reading fluency in the class. A classroom with more print materials provides more support to beginner readers (Mary,

Kabutha & Kamau, 2013). A literacy-rich environment stimulates learners to participate in language and literacy activities, gives learners an understanding and purpose of reading and curbs reading difficulties. Therefore, reading materials of sufficient quantity, quality and variety play a significant role in successful language acquisition. Classes must have wall charts, maps, audiovisuals and pictures, which enhance reading fluency skills. Classrooms with more print materials provide support to beginner learners. A variety of reading books needs to be accessible to lower primary school learners so that they will become independent readers (Nderitu, 2018). Access to story books and other reading materials reinforce reading in Foundation Phase learners.

Mary *et al.* (2013) state that teachers create opportunities for learners to experience successful learning by selecting materials that are in line with learners' ability levels. The use of supplementary materials is one of the reading strategies identified which can improve reading fluency in Kenya (Mary *et al.*, 2013). Reading materials bring excitement and contribute to the foundations of a reading culture. Moreover, reading materials contribute meaningfully to orienting learners to knowledge-seeking as part of lifelong learning. Schools with adequate teaching and learning resources such as books, furniture, and classrooms tend to perform well (Commeryas & Inyenga, 2007; Rono, 2013). The provision of basic resources helps schools to run smoothly. Curriculum implementation and the core business of the school make the school perform better.

Socio-economic factors play a significant part in the development of fluency through extensive reading. In this study, socioeconomic factors included the economic and sociological position of parents and determined perceptions such as affluence or poor status (Obonyo, 2016). Such factors have an impact on teaching reading fluency in a home language (Piper, Jepkemei & Kibukho, 2015; Piper *et al.*, 2017; Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020). Socio-economic background has a substantial impact on the learning achievement of learners according to a study conducted in Kenya (Piper, Jepkemei and Kibukho, 2015). Learners from affluent backgrounds have better access to reading materials as parents provide for them, unlike those who come from poor backgrounds. Family income has been associated with emergent literacy development (Wambiri *et al.*, 2017). Children from a good socio-economic background can access materials from the internet and the library thus improving their reading skills and fluency. Learners from affluent families are more exposed to print and therefore tend to read better than those from middle-income homes (Pretorius &

Stoffelsma, 2019). The number of books found at home has a huge impact on reading (Mwona, 2017). Parents from a good socio-economic background make provisions for resources to be available at home. Learners become better readers at home where books are valued. Learners from high socio-economic families are privileged to have an abundance of print available.

Learners with a higher socio-economic status are advantaged when it comes to school resources and are better than those with a lower economic status (Völkel, 2017). Learners from affluent families have better resources to use at school. Parents with a higher socio-economic status afford to meet the basic needs of their children's learning activities by buying materials such as story books, narratives, games and puzzles. Vocabulary is associated with socio-economic status.

2.5 COMPONENTS OF READING

All learners need to receive clear and logical instructions on the essential components of reading, fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary and reading comprehension (Shanahan, 2005; Bennett, Cartledge & Ramnath, 2017; Guthrie, 2017).

2.5.1 Phonics

Phonics is the study of a letter-sound relationship, breaking up words into their constituent sounds/letters (Rasinski, Rupley & Nicholas, 2008). Phonics is breaking down of words to help learners read by sounding letters. Both fluency and phonics need to be taught and practised at the earliest stages of reading development (Rasinski *et al.*, 2008). Phonics is accuracy in word decoding whereas fluency is automaticity in word recognition. Accuracy is a pre-requisite for fluent reading (Kairaluomaa, Ahonena, Aroa & Holopainen, 2007). Once learners read words accurately, they also become fluent in word recognition. Syllables and words that are read appropriately contribute to the construction of orthographic representations. Learners become more automatic and read with expression. Phonics means decoding a word by breaking it down into units, meaning syllables and sound letters (Phajane, 2014).

Phonics instruction is about the relationship between the letters of a written language and individual sounds of spoken language. Instruction in phonological awareness should begin in preschool and learners to know that written words represent spoken sounds, a process known as decoding which involves breaking a word into separate sounds (Mwona, 2017).

Learners need to process the alphabetic knowledge and apply information about the relationship between letters and sounds to identify words (Piluski & Chard, 2006). Therefore, learners need to be familiar with the letter forms and can segment and blend the smallest units of spoken language. Learners should recognise that letters of the alphabet have the sounds they commonly represent. Learners must understand that written words are made up of sounds or phonemes (Mwona, 2018). Through phonics, learners understand that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes and graphemes (Marima, 2017). According to Ogetange and Githinji (2018), in attaining reading skills, knowledge of phonological structure is the focal enabling condition of reading. Skills such as letter-sound, letter combinations and making sense and association of words need to be acquired first before the reader can read more complicated skills. A sound knowledge of phonics alleviates reading problems in the future and fosters fluency. The main aim of phonics is to learn alphabetic associations.

Phonics and fluency need to be taught and practised in the earliest stages in the lower grades (Rasisnki *et al.*, 2008). In the early stages of school, learners need to connect single phones to syllables and decode them accurately. The connections of phonemes at an early stage of school provide for the possibility of reading accurately, enhancing reading fluency (Kairaluomaa, 2007). There are two types of phonics: synthetic and analytic phonics. Phonics can be taught through an analytical approach where teaching starts at the word level (Rasinsiki *et al.*, 2016). According to Torgeson, Brooks and Hall (2015), analytic phonics refers to an approach to the teaching of reading in which the phonemes associated with graphemes are not pronounced in isolation. In analytic phonics, letter sounds are taught after reading has already begun. Learners initially learn to read some words by sight, often in the context of a meaningful text, whereas in synthetic phonics, learners start to learn to read by sight, but also have phonics lessons where they learn about letter sounds at the required sound (Johnston & Watson, 2005). Phonics is one of the reading strategies for teaching fluency in Grade 3.

Moreover, there is synthetic phonics, which refers to a strategy of teaching of reading in which the phonemes associated with graphemes are pronounced separately and blended

(Torgeson *et al.*, 2015). In the synthetic approach, learners are taught letter sounds separately. Learners are taught how sounds can be blended to build up words. For example, when taught the letter sounds, /v/ /o/ /n/ /a/, learners can build up words such as 'vana', (children) 'nava', (*sitting position of stretching and putting legs together*) 'Ana', and 'vona' (see and the pronoun 'they') Synthetic phonics include sounding and blending, and it is introduced at the beginning of reading (Johnston, McGeown & Watson, 2011). Both analytic and synthetic phonics are vital for the development of reading fluency.

2.5.1.1 Benefits of phonics

Phonics teaches that each letter represents a sound and that the letter should be used whenever the sound is heard (Treiman, 2018). Phonics assists learners in identifying letters and their sounds and how to use them effectively. According to Adams (1990), a learner needs to be rapid and accurate in letter recognition as it is vital to the whole process. An awareness of phonics at the early grades enhances the ability to understand the words and fluency in reading (Maqbool, Sarwar, Zamir, Zaffer & Wei, 2020). Phonics is one of the strategies recommended for Grade 3 learners in the home language (DBE, 2011). It helps learners decode words. Learners can learn phonological and phonemic awareness through language activities such as rhymes, alliteration and sounds to develop their language skills (Siyothula, 2014). In preschool, learners learn that printed words carry meanings and that reading is done from left to right and from top to bottom. Learners should be given effective and efficient development experiences in preschool and effective reading instructions in primary school to prevent reading difficulties.

A study conducted by Ardington *et al.* (2021) about the benchmarking oral reading fluency in the early grades in Nguni languages reveals that reading comprehension fluency is the product of decoding and knowledge of letter sounds and the ability to decode syllables and words. Decoding has more influence on comprehension because learners need to achieve speed and accuracy while reading. Text reading fluency is a fundamental component of reading. It is a gauge needed for the overall reading competence of several skills required to read. Learners become accurate in identifying letters, syllables, and lastly, words. Once accuracy has been mastered, the reading rate also increases.

Many African languages have transparent codes with one-on-one grapheme phoneme correspondence. Learners in transparent languages achieve early foundation skills in reading. Most African languages have a large number of diagraphs and complex sequences, for example, *hl*, *dl*, *kh*, in Xitsonga. Alphabetical knowledge has proven to be fundamental in early reading in transparent languages, including Bantu languages. Knowledge of syllables represented by consonant-vowel (cv) letter is necessary for reading African languages. In Xitsonga, syllables are represented by consonant vowels as well, for example, *malamula* (*oranges*), can be decoded into syllables, *ma/la/mu/la*.

According to Ngure (2019), for learners to be fluent, there should be reading processes that follow each other according to their levels. Phonics and phonemic awareness, whole word reading, sentence and paragraph reading, and comprehension are examples of such a logical progression. According to Marima (2016), phonics is the most preferred method used in teaching reading at early childhood levels in Kenya. It makes reading easier through the repetition of phonic sounds in the given words. Moreover, phonics helps readers to sound out the occasional unknown word they come across in print (Adams, 2011:17).

According to CAPS, teachers are expected to teach learners phonics in Grade 3 four times per week (DBE, 2011). Phonics is about letter sounding where a particular sound is taught for two days in succession before another one is introduced. Learners provide their words from the sound being taught and finally make sentences of their own using the words given. Orthographic patterns have consistent pronunciations. Word recognition is more resourceful when learners process spelling-sound patterns that appear in many words, not as individual units. The objective is to teach orthographic patterns so that they can use their knowledge when they come across words containing the patterns in their reading. Phonic teaching means helping learners comprehend the alphabet and the relationship between phonics teaching and spelling designs. Phonic learning imparts the information in learners to read instructions of letter sounds. Phonics teaching is a strong tool for fluency. Accuracy, identification of words and fluency in reading orally are all achieved through the teaching of phonics (Maqbool *et al.*, 2020).

Reading depends on the ability to recognise words instantaneously and deal with spelling patterns in the form of prefixes, suffixes, syllables and rimes (Piluski & Chard, 2006). Repeated encounters with familiar words instantly allow learners to store letter patterns across different words in Xitsonga, for example, *manga* (*nut*), *timanga* (*nuts*), *ximanga* (*cat*).

If learners encounter a word such as *swimanga* (cats), *swimanganyana* (kittens), they can easily connect *swi- manga*. Phonics training improves word reading fluency in learners (McArthur, Castles, Kohnen, Larsen, Jones, Anandakumar & Banales, 2015). When children first see the word *vona* (see), they must identify the letters, translate each grapheme (i.e., a letter or letter cluster) into a speech sound (i.e., a phoneme, e.g., “v” “o” “n” “a”), and blend these phonemes into a word that is spoken aloud.

A fluent reader can process sounds (Rahmah & Pandjaitan, 2017). Repetition of syllables with different structures, for example, digraphs, helps visual-verbal associations and automaticity (Kairaluomaa *et al.*, 2007). The structure of reading proceeds from smaller to larger units. In Xitsonga, learners start with single graph syllables, *raha- ra/ha* (to kick). When they have processed these sound structures, they can be processed to larger units like *rha/ndza*. It is then that learners use the words to construct sentences, e.g., *Mufana u rhandza ku raha bolo*. (The boy loves to kick the ball).

The use of the phonic method in reading acquisition follows different stages, namely:

- Instruction in accurate and fast grapheme-phoneme conversion,
- Blending of phonemes into syllables, and
- The assembly of syllables into words, sentences and connected text (Kairaluomaa *et al.*, 2007).

Phonics instruction consists of teaching letter-sound correspondence, sounds in isolation, consonant blends, consonant combinations and vowel sounds (Joseph & Schisler, 2009). Consonants and vowels need to be instructed in a specific order. Phonics is the backbone of reading skills thus forming part of a reading programme. Phonic instructions boost decoding and fluency skills.

2.5.2 Phonemic awareness

According to Ehri (2022), phonemic awareness is the ability to concentrate on, differentiate, separate and manipulate phonemes within the pronunciations of words. A phoneme is the smallest part of sounds in a spoken word. It is the segmenting of spoken words (e.g., “cat”) into phonemes (e.g., /k/-/a/-/t/) and blending separated phonemes (e.g., /k/-/a/-/t/) to build whole words. Phonological awareness is the ability to compare, segment and blend various

parts of spoken words such as syllables, onsets and phonemes (Nash and Arciuli, 2014:73). Phonemic awareness enhances learners' ability to hear and manipulate the individual sounds within a word (Shanahan, 2005). Phonological awareness is being sensitive to the sounds and sound structure of a particular language (Wilsenach, 2019). Strong phonological processing skills facilitate the successful acquisition of reading skills (Wilsenach & Makaure, 2018). Phonological awareness is when a learner hears and understands the different sounds and patterns of spoken language, and that different ways of oral language can be broken down into individual parts, for instance, separate sounds and syllables (Phajane & Mokhele, 2013). Learners must hear different parts of spoken language because it requires them to attend to the sounds of speech separately from the meaning. Learners who understand the relationship between sound and letters learn to read and write words. Learners who have acquired an awareness of phonemic skills become good readers because they learn the relationship between individual phonemes and individual graphemes (Phillip *et al.*, 2017).

Learners in the Foundation Phase must have the knowledge that written symbols stand for phonemes of the spoken language (Spaull, Pretorius & Mohohlwane, 2020). A letter-sound relationship is a very important foundational skill in early literacy acquisition. Through letter-sound knowledge, learners become aware of individual sounds in a word. Learners use letter-sound knowledge to sound out new words. Learners must be able to understand that spoken words comprise sounds. For instance, the word 'aka' (to build) has three sounds or phonemes, a/k/a/. This emanates from an awareness of sounds, not letters (Shanahan, 2005). Decoding involves not only identifying the sounds related to the letters in a word but also blending these sounds (Hudson, Pullen, Lane & Torgeson, 2009). Apart from segmentation, learners must learn how to blend separate syllabic units into words *xi/ka/nya/ka/nya* to become *xikanyakanya* (*bicycle*). It is important to assess alphabetic knowledge with older learners as it helps to distinguish fluent readers from struggling readers. Non-readers struggle to grasp the relationship between print and sound.

According to Wilsenach (2019), African languages in South Africa have a simple syllabic structure and a transparent orthography. Learners who read in African languages like Xitsonga must master consonant sounds. Different consonant sounds build up words that are vital when reading, namely, single consonants, (*b, d, f,*), diagraphs, (*ch, rh, hl*), tri-graphs, (*tlh, tsh, rhw*) and four letter consonant sequence, (*ntlh, mpfh, tshw*). Learners need to distinguish between the different letter shapes, their sounds and combinations to get on with

the task of learning to read words that combine single consonants, digraphs, trigraphs and four-letter consonants. The learner must master the aspect of awareness of the syllable to be able to perform tasks such as blending the pronunciation of words into syllables or blending syllables back. Learners with well-developed phonemic awareness skills tend to read with fluency.

2.5.3 Vocabulary instruction

Vocabulary knowledge refers to the knowledge of the words in a spoken and written language by connecting the form, meaning and function (Ji & Baek, 2018). Vocabulary is strongly linked with reading comprehension (Pretorius & Stoffelsma, 2017:2). Learning to read fosters learners' vocabulary. There is a strong association between vocabulary knowledge and reading achievement. Learners who have vast knowledge of vocabulary words tend to be good readers. Vocabulary becomes a stronger factor of reading ability when learners progress in reading ability. Learners' reading skills will be improved if they attend a good preschool (Gove, Poole & Piper, 2017). Learners who do not attend preschool miss an opportunity to acquire the foundational and basic literacy skills like pre-writing and pre-reading skills, hence, they experience reading and writing problems later in life. Vocabulary size determines fluency. Learners who have less vocabulary size have difficulty in reading as they cannot identify most words. Therefore, a larger vocabulary size is the most crucial element of reading comprehension. Reading fluently is the goal of reading whereas vocabulary is the foundation of reading comprehension.

Vocabulary includes knowing the meaning of the words and how to pronounce them correctly. If a learner has a limited understanding of vocabulary, he or she will have a limited understanding of the concepts, which in turn will limit his understanding of the content. As they begin to read, learners must make sense of the words they see in print (Phajane & Mokhele, 2013). Moreover, the class must be print-rich with vocabulary words and charts, stories, and phrases to enable learners to read incidentally. Learners need print rich environment as they develop concepts and vocabulary through reading (Siyothula, 2014).

Vocabulary can also be learnt incidentally during storybook, comprehension, newspaper and magazine reading or when listening to others. It is true that if one reads extensively, one is likely to be a fluent reader. According to Makumbila and Rowland (2016), learners can read

aloud to their peers while, and the peers write down the vocabulary words that they are struggling with. Thereafter, teachers can select vocabulary words and encourage learners to rewrite their sentences. Moreover, vocabulary instructions allow teachers to provide extra support to the struggling groups. Vocabulary knowledge contributes to the development of reading fluency and comprehension (Oliver & Young, 2016). Learners collect vocabulary words before they can read fluently. Vocabulary words can be obtained incidentally during story books or through listening to stories.

2.5.4 Reading fluency and comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined as a cognitive process of making meaning from texts and is dependent on learners' ability to read text accurately and fluently (Khan *et al.*, 2018; Solari, Grimm, McIntyre & Denton, 2018). In reading comprehension, learners make meaning of the text by managing several multiple processes that involve language, word reading, word knowledge and fluency (Ahmadi, 2017). Reading comprehension is the ability to perform oral reading as rapidly and accurately as possible. Comprehension instruction dwells in emergent literacy theory, which is based on the principle that listening, speaking, reading, and writing are interconnected areas of ability in a child's development (Block & Lacinia, 2011). Learners who have good listening skills and possess speaking vocabulary are likely to succeed in reading comprehension.

According to Mwona (2018), learners who attend preschool are much better at literacy than those who do not attend. An early introduction to reading before primary school can greatly increase literacy development and reading comprehension (Nderitu, 2018). Text reading fluency has a strong relation to reading comprehension for developing children and learners with reading difficulties (Kim, Park & Wagner, 2014; Kim, 2015). Learners who read a text fluently with accurate speed and prosody are likely to understand comprehension. Reading comprehension is analysed based largely on three components: word recognition, vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension (Ji & Baek, 2018; Geva *et al.*, 2011). A learner who understands what they are reading must recognise words accurately and have broader vocabulary knowledge and good comprehension skills. Phonological awareness, orthographic awareness, morphological awareness, letter name knowledge, vocabulary and rapid automatised naming influence emergent literacy skills and must be greatly considered during the beginning phase of reading development (Kim, 2015).

Readers are expected to read accurately and speedily, with comprehension and enjoyment at the end of Grade 3 (Spaull, Pretorius & Mohohlwane, 2019). The components of comprehension are fluent oral reading, making inferences, connecting text to background knowledge or asking and answering questions (Paris & Hamilton, 2011). Grade 3 learners must read with fluency and a speed suitable for their grade level. Some factors impact on the teaching of reading fluency of Grade 3 home language learners in South Africa. Reading fluency, vocabulary and working memory are important predictors of reading comprehension (Marloes, Muijselaar, Swart, Steenbeek-Planting, Droop, Verhoeven & de Jong, 2017). Fluent readers are automatic and effortless in their reading comprehension (Rasinski, 2014).

Schwanenflugel et al. (2006) proffer that comprehension measures are strongly predicted by word-level automaticity measures, which consist of speed and accuracy (Hoffman, 2011). Learners who recognise words automatically can comprehend what they are reading. Word recognition and reading comprehension depend on language development (Adams, 2011). If the learners' language is well-developed and rich in vocabulary words, they can easily recognise words in print and read comprehension fluently. Foundation Phase comprehension instruction must be clear and must teach learners to think, model, scaffold and independently use reading processes (Block & Lacina, 2011). Learners need to be confident enough to tell teachers what they need and want to learn to comprehend better and attain sufficient reading, vocabulary and decoding development.

Learners facing challenges in word decoding and fluency will experience problems in comprehension (Rasinski, Rupley & Nichols, 2008). According to Klaude and Guthrie (2008), vocabulary and comprehension have a reciprocal causal relationship. Fluency instruction emphasises vocabulary development because learners who have high-quality vocabulary read fluently. According to Elle, Lindo, Morphy and Compton (2009), vocabulary knowledge is likely to depend on a person's background knowledge. If a person has more knowledge of a subject, they are likely to better comprehend a text about that subject. According to Harmon and Wood (2018), vocabulary size is a strong predictor of a learner's ability to comprehend a text. Therefore, the more words a learner knows, the higher the level of their comprehension. A deeper understanding of words and expanded vocabulary makes reading comprehension easier. Reading comprehension is the ability to connect what the reader knows and to construct meaning that is reasonable and accurate. According to Korat (2010), a rich vocabulary is an important vehicle for reading comprehension.

Therefore, vocabulary and comprehension are the last components of reading and are intertwined. Vocabulary increases comprehension, and comprehension is the final component of reading.

2.6 FACTORS THAT INHIBIT THE TEACHING AND ACQUISITION OF FLUENT READING

According to Stevens, Walker and Vaughn (2016), learners with learning disabilities struggle to develop fluency. Learners with reading disabilities spend less time with a text and this affects vocabulary acquisition and comprehension development. Some learners find it difficult to read even if they have normal reading instructions (McArthur, Castles, Kohnen, Larsen, Anandakumar & Banales, 2015). Poor readers tend to read in a laboured, disconnected way and most of their cognitive capacity is focused on decoding at the word level. A non-fluent learner reads slowly and stammers. They lack fluency in their reading, stop over each word, and in turn, are unable to grasp what the text is about. According to Khan et al. (2018) and Kang et al. (2018), a lack of decoding skills derails the acquisition of fluency. Learners who lack decoding skills are unable to read fluently because when they acquire decoding skills, they can accurately read words and passages. Decoding is a prerequisite for fluency. According to Antipkina, Kuznetsova and Kardanova (2017), a lack of phonological awareness and vocabulary size is a hindrance to oral reading fluency. Limited vocabulary is associated with phonemic and phonological awareness. If learners do not understand the words, they pronounce them wrongly, omit the sounds and change the sequence.

Many struggling readers present with early reading problems related to decoding and reading fluency (Khan *et al.*, 2018). This means that basic reading skill deficits will make it challenging for these children to comprehend texts. Furthermore, struggling readers who have basic skill deficits are identified as tirelessly poor readers. Thus, more than half of struggling readers within higher grades display basic skill deficits, including decoding and reading fluency difficulties. Although some learners in high grades can accurately and fluently read words, many of them struggle with comprehension. They read without understanding, hence, they battle to answer the written text. As learners progress, they are expected to comprehend a variety of texts in the form of essays and informative writing. Thus, when faced with unfamiliar texts, learners whose basic skills are deficient, even if they did not previously experience

reading difficulties, may experience challenges beginning in the Intermediate Phase because of workload and encountering many unfamiliar subjects.

Struggling with word identification can be a hindrance to constructing meaning (Mraz, Nichols, Caldwell, Beasley & Sargent, 2013). Many non-fluent readers have difficulty moving to a level of fluency that allows them to easily comprehend what they are reading. The reading of learners who cannot recognise several words encountered while reading texts becomes laborious and slow and lack comprehension of what they are reading. Automatic word recognition is essential to a reader's ability to effectively comprehend.

2.7 TEACHING READING STRATEGIES

To attain reading fluency and for learners to understand what they are reading, there must be strategies for reading. There are different strategies that teachers use in class to teach reading. All these strategies are important for the attainment of reading fluency skills in home languages. The following teaching strategies are outlined to teach reading in the Foundation Phase: shared reading, guided reading and independent reading (DBE, 2011).

2.7.1 Shared reading

Shared reading is a strategy where teachers share reading with the whole class (DBE, 2011). Shared reading needs to be planned and can be implemented with any age or ability group and age level (Mzimane & Mantlana, 2017:110). A shared book reading strategy expands the learners' knowledge of language structures such as vocabulary and narratives (Tayob & Moonsay, 2018). The shared reading strategy happens two to four days a week. The teacher uses a single, enlarged text for the whole class such as big books, posters and pictures or a text on an overhead transparency. According to DBE (2011), shared reading happens in the first fifteen minutes of reading focus time. During shared reading, the learners use pictures or illustrations of the book to make predictions on what the book is about. Learners make connections between print and the text. They can also use the title of the book to make predictions about what will happen in the book. Learners can pause during reading and try to find out what will happen next. Learners focus on the important aspects of the text. It is done by making use of Big Books, posters or overhead projectors (DBE, 2011; Siyothula, 2014). The teacher can write a passage on a chart or a chalkboard to help struggling learners

through shared reading if they have no resources. Learners are exposed to vocabulary development, comprehension, decoding skills and text structures during shared reading (DBE, 2011).

Foundation Phase learners experience narrative stories through shared book reading at home or school (Sampson & Condy, 2016). Shared reading helps learners who are struggling to read to learn as they read along with others (Mzimane & Mantlana, 2017). A print-rich environment creates opportunities for vocabulary acquisition because even struggling learners can read incidentally without assistance. Learners make sense of the words they see in print. Teachers must ensure that their classes are rich in print to enrich learners' vocabulary.

According to Abugo, Maina and Meitamel (2019), grouping learners during reading improves learners' acquisition of vocabulary. Shared reading develops learners' ability to read fluently. Through shared reading, learners are exposed to a rich and engaging discourse with print that ranges in text complexity. Moreover, shared reading can be used to introduce new vocabulary and gain practice with nouns, verbs, adjectives and prepositions. Shared reading can expose the learners to different genres like poems, fables, drama, folktales and storybooks. Learners interact with the teacher as they ask questions and answer questions. They listen and speak. The teacher facilitates active speaking and listening skills by asking questions about the text.

Shared reading is promoted as one strategy for realising fluent reading. The study conducted was based on the teaching of fluent reading in Xitsonga. The researcher needed to see how the mentioned strategies were infused into the teaching of fluent reading and the sequence in which they were introduced. Reading books are in short supply, especially in the mother tongue, the focus of this study. Shared and individual reading are strategies lauded as important in the teaching of reading. With the scarcity of reading books, the researcher wanted to find out if there were alternative strategies teachers used to augment the lack of reading books so that reading would go unabated.

2.7.2 Guided reading

Guided reading is targeted at the individual needs of learners and is effective in supporting early readers in developing grade-level achievements (Phillips, Nicholas, Rupley, Paige &

Ransinski, 2016). Guided reading is a small group reading strategy aimed at providing differentiated teaching with the aim of reaching learners' different reading abilities (Phillips *et al.*, 2016; DBE, 2011). According to Long and Szabo (2016), in guided reading, the learners interact with the teacher and the text in a small instructional group setting. Guided reading has a variety of strategies that can be used by teachers to increase vocabulary (Makumbila & Rowland, 2016). Learners work in small groups with the teacher for three to five days per week to develop phonemic awareness, vocabulary, reading comprehension and fluency (Makumbila & Rowland, 2016). Learners can read in groups while using guided reading (Mary *et al.*, 2013). Learners are grouped according to their ability levels. Grouping of learners improves reading fluency. Teachers use this strategy to ensure that the motivation to read is sustained for every learner and guards against the frustration of learners who are lagging behind. Ability grouping facilitates learners' literacy achievement and further improves academic performance. Through ability groupings, poor readers are supported and encouraged while motivating independent readers, especially in large classrooms. Learners can develop social skills, build a sense of community, support and depend on each other for their learning experiences. During group work, learners oversee their learning during a reading lesson.

The teacher models reading to the class on how to read, summarise and ask questions about the text read. Learners can also write their stories and tell them to a group. The teacher selects levelled reading texts familiar to a particular reading group. As learners engage in guided and independent reading, their ability to recognise words improves, their vocabulary increases, their comprehension advances, and their reading fluency, word recognition automaticity and prosody also improve (Kuhn, Rasinski & Zimmerman, 2014).

Guided reading is broken down into three distinct reading components, namely, 'before', 'during' and 'after reading' (Phillips, 2016). The teacher gives support by guiding the group as they read the text. Guided reading enables and empowers learners to become successful and fluent readers. Learners have an opportunity to learn to comprehend at higher levels as individuals (Fisher, 2008). The teacher must prepare flashcards for difficult words and new vocabulary words. Guided reading leads to independent reading (Long & Szabo, 2016). Guided reading allows learners to practise fluency in their home language and extends learners' vocabulary knowledge. According to Major (2018), group work promotes unity and cooperation. Learners listen to each other as they learn. Through group work, learners value

each other. Learners make their own rules in class, which gives them a sense of responsibility. Learning becomes active in their learning. Moreover, it allows teachers to observe and identify learners' needs and weaknesses as they assess their reading and provides teachers with extra time to support struggling groups.

2.7.3 Independent reading

In independent reading, teachers allow learners to read independently to ensure that they have understood the context (Mzimane & Mantlana, 2017). It boosts their confidence as they can select their books according to their interest. Learners choose the reading texts or books based on their ability. Independent reading helps to identify learners with reading barriers and thus help them accordingly. Teachers observe, listen and gather information about learners' reading sessions. Independent reading helps learners to develop oral reading fluency. The learners will read books for enjoyment to practise and boost their individual reading abilities (Phala, 2019:98). After reading, learners check their comprehension by asking questions about the text read by the learner. This will help the teacher to gather information about the learners' reading skills.

2.8 SUPPORTING OF STRUGGLING LEARNERS BY TEACHERS

In every school, some learners are struggling to read. The non-fluent learners need to be supported by the teacher, peers and the family to read fluently and to reach their desired goals. A study conducted by Mehigan (2020) argues that motivation plays an important role in influencing learners to read. Klauda and Barber (2019) agree that motivation and support are the keys for learners who encounter reading problems. Struggling learners lose confidence when they encounter reading material which seems difficult for them to read, and through motivation, the task becomes easy to handle. There is a relationship between fluency and motivation for reading. therefore, when teachers give instruction to struggling learners, it should address their motivation for. It is the teachers' responsibility to promote reading fluency through motivation.

On the other hand, Aldhanhani and Abu-Ayyash (2020) share the same sentiments and state that teachers should address learners' intrinsic motivation by providing them with a wide range of different texts such as novels, and poetry that would engage and attract their

attention and interest. Learners should be given a wide range of reading materials to challenge to reading problem. Teachers need to assess learners in reading so that they can be able to move from one stage of reading to another. There is a need for more knowledgeable teachers who will support learners by building up and developing their reading skills.

To alleviate reading difficulties, Aldhanhani and Abu-Ayyash (2020) posit that the Foundation Phase classes should be printed with words to improve learners` vocabulary knowledge. The class should be rich in print with short stories, poems, word walls and syllabic charts. Squires, Gillam and Reutzel (2013) argue that teachers can do scaffold support with visual support to help learners. The use of pictures and words together can help them to read with understanding and progressively with fluency. learners can participate actively in class activities if they are provided with enough support. After a while, learners with visual support can depend less on scaffolding and gradually need less support.

Squires et al. (2013) maintain that the dialogue reading technique is recommended to be used by teachers to broaden vocabulary knowledge. The teacher could ask learners to predict or make comments on the story given. Moreover, the teacher can ask closed-ended questions to provoke the learners` ability to answer questions. The learner can be corrected by the teacher, model and expand the response to give the new vocabulary words. The learner can be given another opportunity to answer closed-ended questions and the dialogue can continue like that, providing learners with new vocabulary.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed reading fluency, language in policy for South Africa, benefits of using a home language, theoretical framework, five components of fluency and teaching strategies needed for fluency and studies conducted on the teaching of reading fluency. The components of reading were useful in guiding this study and deciphering their importance in the teaching of the Xitsonga language with transparent orthography.

The next chapter elucidates the research methodology of the study.

CHAPER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research approach, design and methodology are covered in this chapter. Research methodology refers to the systematic procedures from the initial identification of the problem to be researched to its conclusions. The purpose of the methodology is to conduct research in a way that is acceptable, trustworthy and grounded in science. It entails tasks that include problem solving, methodology development, data collecting and analysis, interpretation of findings and conclusion. Methodology is a roadmap on which the research method goes through and is directed by reliable strategies used over time by previous researchers (Nkuna, 2015).

According to Creswell, Hanson, Plano and Morales (2007), methodology is the nature in which research emerges. Benini (2000) contends that methodology is a research strategy that translates ontological and epistemological principles into rules outlining how research should be carried out. Methodology refers to the plan or set of decisions and procedures that govern a study and make it clear to others (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012:102; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). It shows the kind of research process employed in the collection and analysis of data. The methodology of qualitative research is characterised as inductive, emergent, and influenced by the researcher's experience in collecting and analysing the data (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative researcher uses inductive reasoning that starts from the standpoint of the researcher working its way up. The summary of the methodology employed in this study is presented diagrammatically and includes a step-by-step, sequential approach to the research process. Research design provides a way for the research process to follow. The research paradigm, research approach, research design, data collection and techniques, data analysis, credibility and trustworthiness and ethical concerns noted by the researcher are all covered in this chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The interpretivism paradigm was employed for this study. A paradigm, according to Bryman (2006), is a collection of concepts that outline how people experience the world along with

their worldview or how people see themselves and the world. Moreover, Morse and Niehaus (2009) state that a paradigm helps social researchers and scientists grasp what is significant, depending on how one views the world, rational, genuine and authentic in their field of study. Additionally, the authors concur that a paradigm is a philosophical position that informs the methodology to be carried out and directs the process of research.

Interpretivism asserts that the truth and knowledge are distinctive, and are culturally and historically situated (Gemma, 2018). People's view of truth and knowledge differs; it depends on where one originates. Interpretivism is a more people-centred approach, which acknowledges a research's integration within the research environment (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2013). Merriam (2009) contends that interpretive research maintains that reality is socially constructed. It is based on people's experience and their understanding. It is a methodological way of understanding social reality. Interpretivism can, for example, enable a researcher to build a rich and local understanding of the experiences of teachers and learners in a classroom context. It develops standards of trustworthiness and authenticity that are different but equivalent to the validity, reliability, and objectivity of positivism (Taylor & Medina, 2011). Reliability is simple to attain when a measure is concrete, accurate and observable (Neuman, 2011).

There are primary approaches to interpretivism. There is a hermeneutics approach, which is frequently associated with reading and interpreting texts or documents to gain a deeper meaning of them. Another approach is *verstehen*, which seeks to understand why a phenomenon exists and why participants in the research study behave the way they do. In addition, there is a symbolic interaction approach, which focuses on meaning and interaction (Ryan, 2018; Merriam, 2009). Symbolic interaction has three principles: people's behaviour is based on their meaning. People behave the way they feel is right. Through social interactions, they generate the meaning of life. Moreover, people may adapt meanings based on their perceptions of experiences. Symbolic interactions focus on the meaning of interpretation that they create (Merriam, 2009). Interpretivism lens assisted the researcher in interpreting data from the participants' perspective on the teaching of reading fluency skills in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

For this current study, a phenomenological research design was adopted. Research design, according to Pandey and Pandey (2015), is the structure for a study that serves as a roadmap for data collection and analysis. A research design is a plan for conducting research since it specifies the study methodologies and strategies that a researcher utilises. According to Alase (2017), a phenomenological study is rich and descriptively deep in its analytical process because it gives in-depth data collection using various methods of collecting data. It helps a researcher to collect data by adopting appropriate and precise methodologies and processes. It provides a plan, guidance, and direction to be followed throughout the research process and ultimately, provides an overview to other researchers interested in the research project. As stated by Pandey and Pandey (2015), a good study design generally minimises biases and maximises the dependability of the data gathered and analysed. A solid research design should be able to offer pertinent data regarding the research study. It should also be objective, reliable, valid and generalisable.

A phenomenological approach study is a type of qualitative research that shows how a term or phenomenon means different things to different people based on their personal experience (Creswell, 2007). It is a design of enquiry about the philosophy and psychology behind a phenomenon as fully described by participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Phenomenology is a study of people's conscious experience of their lives (Merriam, 2009). According to Padilla-Diaz (2015), the phenomenological approach is used when a research problem entails understanding human lived experiences in a particular setting. The targeted group need to be able to express their lived experiences of a research topic. Phenomenological methods place a strong emphasis on the participants' interpretation of their experiences as well as strict attention to the specifics of their lived experiences. The focus of phenomenology is on the understanding of human action and how it relates to phenomena (Brundent & Roges, 2013). Phenomenologists collaborate with participants in the field and rely heavily on each participant's responses. It permits a researcher to provide the most precise description of the phenomena while eschewing any pre-established framework and staying faithful to the realities revealed by collected data (Groenewald, 2004).

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

For this study, the qualitative research approach was adopted. Qualitative research narrates the understanding of some aspects of social life, and data analysis produces words rather than numbers (Bricki & Green, 2020). Qualitative researchers study phenomena in the light of their natural setting and strive to interpret them in terms of the conceptual meanings that people assign to them (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A natural setting is where participants experience the problem and their understanding, therefore, it can generate rich data. It is an interpretive technique that seeks to describe, decode and translate the meaning of naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. The following qualities of qualitative research are essential in understanding its nature: emphasis on process, understanding and meaning. The research serves as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The process is inductive, and the product is richly descriptive (Merriam, 2009). The researcher works back and forth between the themes until the construct is a complete set of themes.

Researchers go to the site, setting or field to observe the behaviour of the participants in their natural setting rather than them coming to the researcher (Creswell, 2007; Creswell *et al.*, 2018; Mohajan, 2018). A researcher repeatedly has a face-to-face interaction with participants in their natural setting and for a long period. Researchers do not send out research instruments for individuals to complete, instead, they visit the sites or institutions where the participants are. The primary characteristic of qualitative research is the collection of data from individuals directly through interviews and observation of how they behave and act in relation to their environment.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative researchers are interested in how people make sense of their experiences, how they develop their worlds, and what relevance they attach to their experiences. The primary objective of qualitative research is to figure out how individuals perceive their experiences, clarify the meaning-making process, and describe how people construct their meanings (Merriam, 2009). The goal of qualitative research is to comprehend the context of the study and what it means for the participants to be there. It investigates the lives of the participants and how they interpret the world therein. Identifying the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives is the primary goal of the phenomenological approach (Creswell *et al.*, 2018). In qualitative study, the researchers

maintain their focus on determining the meaning that the participants attach to the subject throughout the entire study. Qualitative research keeps focus on the information from the participants.

In qualitative research, researchers are the primary instruments for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2007, Mohajan, 2018, Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researchers collect data themselves through interviews, observation and document analysis. They collect multiple sources of data and interpret it. The goal of this research is to understand the human instrument, which can be immediately responsive and adaptive and would seem to be the ideal means of collecting and analysing data. Researchers can expand their understanding through non-verbal as well as verbal communication, process data immediately, clarify and summarise material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation and explore unusual or unanticipated responses. The human instrument may have biasness or subjectivities; it is important to identify and monitor them.

In contrast to positivist research, which deductively tests hypotheses, qualitative researchers acquire data to develop concepts, hypotheses or theories (Merriam, 2009). All the information and data gathered through interviews, observations or document analysis are arranged and combined into themes. The researchers work tirelessly between the themes and the database until they provide a comprehensive set of themes and categories (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative data findings are drawn inductively from data and appear in the form of themes, categories typologies, concepts and even theories about a particular practice-related subject. All the studies are guided by a particular framework that enables the researcher to solely focus on the research while analysing the data at hand. A specific theoretical framework serves as a foundation for all studies.

The setting of the study, the participants involved, and the activities of interest are likely to be detailed in the findings. In addition, a variety of sources of data, such as research quotes from documents, field notes, participant interviews, excerpts from audio recordings, electronic communication or any combination of these are continually employed to support the findings of the study (Creswell *et al.*, 2018; Merriam, 2009). These quotes and excerpts have an impact on the descriptive nature of qualitative research. All of these are open-ended data collection methods where participants are free to communicate their thoughts without being constrained by specified scales or instruments. Data are reviewed, analysed, and organised into codes and themes by researchers.

Qualitative researchers employ emergent research methodology. This implies that the initial plan may be modified or shifted once the researcher enters the field and starts gathering data.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The population was a primary school community. For this present research, the participants who were selected lived within a radius of 100 kilometres to reduce travelling long distances and costs. The researcher aimed to reach more participants in a reasonable time, taking into consideration that the study was qualitative and would require time. There are different types of sampling procedures in research, such as convenience, snowball, quota, systematic, purposive simple random and stratified sampling (Newman, 2014). A researcher sampled 5 primary schools in Hlanganani Central Circuit which has 21 primary schools. Hlanganani Central Circuit is one of the 14 circuits in Vhembe West District in Limpopo Province. The participants were sampled purposefully. For this study, the researcher employed purposeful sampling deliberately to select participants and sites to learn and fully understand a fundamental phenomenon.

3.6 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

For this study, the researcher purposefully selected 5 public primary schools in Hlanganani Central Circuit, Khomanani Cluster in Vhembe West District in Limpopo Province. The researcher selected a total of ten participants, 5 Departmental Heads and 5 Grade 3 teachers to participate in the interviews. The selection was guided by the participants' accessibility, including local geographical area, time and availability.

The goal of purposeful sampling is to use a sample of individuals or groups to obtain rich information. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) indicate that in purposeful sampling, researchers make specific choices about people, groups or objects to include in the sample. Qualitative research purposefully selects participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Purposeful sampling was suitable for the study because it provided the researcher with an opportunity to select participants who were working as department heads (DH) in the Foundation Phase and teachers who were currently teaching Xitsonga (HL) in

Grade 3. According to Gabor (2007), in purposeful sampling, participants are selected for their knowledge, experience and expertise and the choice of the participants depends on the decision of the researcher. The researcher selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and phenomenon (Creswell, 2020). The researcher considered DHs and Grade 3 teachers as suitable participants in this study due to their position and experience. Patton (2002) affirms that purposeful sampling is a sampling strategy in which settings, persons or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION AND TECHNIQUES

Data collection instrument is a term referring to tools used to gather data. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), in qualitative approach, there are four primary procedures for collecting data: observation, interview, document analysis and audio-visual and digital materials. All data collection instruments used in this research are explained below. The methodologies, their distinctive features, advantages and their applicability for this study are all included. The aim of data of collection was to gather high-quality evidence that would support extensive data analysis (Deshmukh & Latur, 2015).

3.7.1 Interviews

An interview is a data collection technique in a qualitative study. An interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participants questions to gather information and to learn about their ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours (Maree, 2014:87). An interview is a conversation with the purpose of gathering information, (Alase, 2017). It is a data collection method of exploring people's experiences and views. Merriam (2009) defines an interview as a process in which a researcher and participant are deliberately engaged in conversation, focusing on the research questions.

According to Johnson, Scheitle and Ecklund (2019), the goal of qualitative interviews is to generate detailed data on how participants assign meaning to experiences, events or themes. In this qualitative study, a researcher interviewed the participants individually in their natural settings and in their field of work to gather information about a phenomenon. Merriam (2005)

claims that an interview is a guide used by a researcher to seek the experience, understanding, thoughts and feelings of the participants. The goal of qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participants as they delve more into the phenomenon and provide more valuable information. Almari (2019) states that an interview can be structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Meanwhile, Taylor, Marjorie and DeVault (2016) state that a qualitative interview is a non-directive, unstructured, non-standardised and open-ended kind of interviewing which allows the researcher to follow up on the participants.

In this study, an interview was used alongside observation and document analysis by the researcher to collect information on teaching reading fluency in Xitsonga (HL) to Grade 3 learners. Ten (10) participants, comprising five (5) Grade 3 teachers and five (5) Foundation Phase DHs were interviewed individually. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. The interview was one-on-one with the participants. The interview was 35 minutes long or more depending on the responses of the participants. Jentoft and Olsen (2017) contend that the purpose of the interview is to engage participants in revealing their views, descriptions and perceptions of the research problem. Using interviews, the participants had the opportunity to share their thoughts and understanding about the teaching of reading fluency.

According to Maree (2014), the success of an interview depends on several factors and the participants are crucial for providing in-depth data. The key is to find participants who are qualified to provide the researcher with the information required. The participants must be clear about the goal of the interview and the information they will be providing. The interview aims to collect rich, descriptive data on the phenomenon being studied and saturate it. The questioning strategy is very crucial to obtain beneficial information. Questions must be clear and neutral; the interviewer must also avoid leading questions. The questions must be able to dig deeper to get in-depth information. Qualitative interview questions are open-ended, clear, neutral and sensitive (Doody *et al.*, 2013). The type of questions the interviewer asks is very important, as a variety of questions must be included in the interview to produce an in-depth knowledge of the questions at hand. Good interviewers listen attentively to every detailed information and do not dominate the interview. The interviewer must not be judgmental and never argue with the participant. The interviewer must carefully observe the respondent's nonverbal communication and maintain verbal cues. For face-to-face interviews, the researcher needs participants who speak and share ideas willingly.

The researcher must determine the place for conducting the interview where it would be quiet and free from distractions (Creswell, 2007).

3.7.2 Observations

Queirós, Faria and Almeida (2017) state that observation is another process of collecting information, where a researcher observes a participant's behaviour in a natural setting (Heigham & Croker, 2009). Creswell and Creswell (2018) contend that the researcher takes field notes and observes the behaviour of participants on the site. The researcher used participant observation when dealing with educators and learners in the classroom as they were in a natural setting. The researcher observed the learners who read with understanding and those who read without comprehension. Furthermore, through observation, the researcher found out the strategies and teaching methods that were used in a classroom setting. In addition, the researcher observed the resources used in the Grade 3 classrooms to enhance reading.

Like all data collection methods, there are advantages and disadvantages associated with observations. Therefore, the researcher must always remember to take fieldnotes, record quotes accurately for inclusion in field notes, determine the best timing for moving from a non-participant and keeping from being astounded at the site by information, and learn how to move the observations from a narrow picture to a broad picture (Creswell, 2007). Besides, the most formal observational methods include an observational instrument and the identification of a specific set of occasions for making the observations, for example, in the classroom where the core business of the school takes place.

However, an observation can be an invaluable way of collecting data because what the researcher sees with their own eyes and perceives with their senses is not filtered by what others might have (self-) reported to them or what the author of some document might have said (Yin, 2011). The researcher's observations are a form of primary data, and therefore, must be highly valued. In this regard, the researcher is completely passive. In qualitative research observation, the researcher plays a passive role, but, regardless of passivity, there are ways of dealing with bias and potential lack of representativeness in making field observations (Yin, 2011). Importantly, it may be challenging to ensure that the observed classes are the same as they would be without observation.

In a school environment, the researcher must decide with the teachers in advance to secure permission, agree on a plan, and thereafter, start the observation process. It is crucial to ask class teachers or subject teachers for advice on the issue of relevant time. The most appropriate place for the observer to sit in the classroom should be determined by the teacher. The teacher may recommend that the observer sit at the back or at the side of the classroom. Some may suggest that the researcher comes to class a few days before so that learners may become acclimated to him or her.

3.7.3 Document analysis

Document analysis is a valuable research method that has been used for qualitative research (Morgan, 2022). Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating a document (Dalgish, Khalid & Mchon, 2020). It can be used to provide data and generate questions on the research topic under investigation. It is about investigating various kinds of documents, including books, newspaper articles, company reports, memoranda, agendas, academic journal articles, and institutional reports or any document that is connected to the investigation (Muzari, Shava & Shonhiwa, 2022, Maree, 2014).

For this study, documents such as CAPS documents and NECT lesson plans were analysed. Any texts or visual material used in the research study like documents can be a source for qualitative analysis. Documents, such as books and articles, can be an important source for investigating any subject by the researcher. Document analysis includes documents which are classroom assignments and research surveys (Muzari *et al.*, 2022). Documents allow the researcher to attain the language and words of the participants. As written evidence, it saves a researcher time and expenses of transcribing (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Document analysis can be beneficial because of the constancy of the data. However, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), document analysis has some challenges as some documents may be incomplete and not provide the required information. Some documents are protected and not easily accessible to public or private use. Some documents may not be authentic or accurate, resulting in false information.

The procedure of conducting a document analysis commenced after finding the documents for the study such as CAPS, NECT, ATP, syllabic charts and other resources in Grade 3 classes.

Researchers need to consider several factors in selecting documents. Document analysis can be subject to concerns regarding credibility, reliability, authenticity, a lack of representability and meaning (Dalgish *et al.*, 2022; Muzari *et al.*, 2022). These are factors to consider when deciding which documents to include in the research. Depending on the research questions, document analysis can be used alongside different types of interviews and observations (Morgan, 2022). In selecting documents to be included in the research, it is important to check if the document is not forged; it has to be authentic. It can be determined by its primary source, the date, authorship and publication to confirm its authenticity.

3.7.4 Procedure for data collection

Certain procedures and methods need to be adhered to ensure that all ethical considerations are followed in conducting the interview for the qualitative research. The researcher applied for ethical approval to the University of South Africa Ethics Committee. This was to ensure that the research and data collection methods followed all the ethical considerations as required. According to Creswell (2012), acquiring approval from university research committees is an essential step prior to commencing any research. Both Limpopo Department of Education and Vhembe West District Office received official letters from the researcher requesting approval to conduct a study in Vhembe West District schools.

The researcher also submitted consent forms to all participants of the study. The researcher must obtain participants' written permission to take part in the study (Creswell, 2007). The consent forms detailed the research's objectives, concerns about confidentiality and anonymity and participants' autonomy to withdraw from the research at any time. The participants were given instructions by the researcher to sign the consent forms as evidence of their willingness to take part in the study. Alase (2017) states that participants should sign informed consent forms and a letter of permission to take part in the study.

Interviews began after their approval to take part in the interview. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state that one of the ethical issues that govern research is to obtain approval from each participant and to reach an agreement with them. The researcher planned with the participants to decide on suitable venues and times for conducting the interviews on time before they started the process of interviewing. The interviews were conducted outside the school teaching and learning programme to avoid disruption of the lessons. According to the

DBE (2015), research conducted in schools should not in any way disrupt the normal process of teaching and learning. The core business of the school must not be disrupted in any way as this will be a violation of the school and departmental policies.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), selecting individuals for being part of semi-structured interviews starts with describing the desired profile of a person who will have an understanding and more knowledge about the topic. According to Alase (2017), before each interview, the researcher should develop some kind of icebreaker to relieve tension between him and the participants. The participants should feel relaxed about the whole process. The interviews commenced with straightforward questions and tried to break the ice by requiring the biographical information of the participants. The small talk allowed the participants to relax. According to Creswell (2012), a bond can be achieved by beginning the interview with small talk. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) indicate that it is important for researchers to create a connection with the participants during interviews. In working to achieve understanding, interviewers need to be always humble and respectful and show genuine interest in what the interviewee has to say. The interview will proceed to the prepared questions after the ice breaker and will require the participants to provide experiences, feelings, perceptions and understanding regarding the teaching of reading fluency skills in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) (Maree, 2013)

Creswell (2005) and Alase (2017) argue that during interviews, researchers should use technological devices such as voice recorders and notepads to collect data. Note-taking is very important (Ahlin, 2019). The devices should be used with full consensus and approval of the participants. According to Creswell (2005), recording is one way of guaranteeing the trustworthiness of the collected data. The researcher must ensure that recording equipment functions well and that spare batteries and tapes are available in case the battery stops functioning during the interview (Groenewald, 2004). The interview setting must be as free as possible from background noise and interruptions. Creswell (2014) and Leedy and Ormrod (2013) state that novice researchers must keep their reactions to themselves when conducting interviews by not showing to be surprised by, agreeing with, or disapproving of the information volunteered by the participants as it would distract them. Therefore, the use of body language such as nodding to indicate approval or disapproval is not allowed during interviews.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Creswell (2007:148), Maxwell (2008) and Neuman (2014), data analysis includes organising and preparing data for analysis, then condensing it into themes through the coding process. Data would be represented in figures, tables or a discussion. The themes must reflect the researcher's interpretations and the participants' original words and thoughts (Cooper, Fleischer & Fatima, 2012). In qualitative data analysis, themes and patterns are abstracted from verbally, visually and orally collected data (Gilliland, 2014).

Data collection, data analysis and report writing are not distinctive, instead, they are interrelated and frequently take place concurrently in a research project (Creswell, 2007). The researcher collects data, analyses them and gives a report. The purpose of data analysis is to summarise data so that they are easily understood and provide answers to the research questions (Kelly *et al.*, 2003). Qualitative analysis is a process that deals with data presented in textual, verbal and multi-focus format. In this qualitative study, a qualitative analysis is appropriate as data were gathered through interviews, observation and document analysis which declared them to be in textual and verbal forms. Sarantakos (2007) asserts that the purpose of qualitative analysis is to translate and interpret data rigorously and academically, as data are viewed as representations of human lived experiences and verbal information. In this study, data were collected through interviews, observation and data analysis using a tape recorder. The main analysis was conducted after data collection; the researcher listened to the audio tape recordings. According to Maxwell (2008), data analysis in qualitative studies can be conducted either during data collection or at the data analysis stage. Tracy (2013), Maree (2014) and Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) assert that in qualitative studies, data analysis is a continuous and iterative process, hence, data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined. Good knowledge of data analysis helped the researcher to interpret the data to provide meaningful insights into the problem being examined.

The elements of data analysis are intertwined and cyclic. The goal of the researcher in analysing data is to summarise what has been heard and observed in terms of common words or phrases and interpret them. Most qualitative researchers analyse and code their data; qualitative analysis is an intuitive and inductive process (Taylor *et al.*, 2016). The hallmark of qualitative data analysis is that it is an inductive process (Ravindran, 2019).

It entails probing generated data with enquiries. The inductive phase of qualitative research starts as soon as data collection gets underway. To continuously improve their interpretations and obtain a deeper understanding of the subjects being studied, and to continuously refine their interpretations, qualitative researchers analyse their data. In the end, the researcher is faced with the task of concluding the findings of the study. The task of generating conclusions according to the study findings finally lies with the researcher.

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) process reveals the focus of phenomenology, detailed examinations of the personal lived experiences of participants and understanding of a particular phenomenon (Cooper, Fleisher & Fatima, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2015). The researcher tries to make sense of what is happening in the participants' experiences. IPA is valuable when examining topics that are complicated, vague and emotionally exhausting. The interviewer requires a high level of skill to enquire further into interesting and important aspects. Many novice researchers are attracted to IPA for its accessibility, flexibility and applicability (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2008).

In this approach, themes were coded and identified, which allowed the researcher to look for patterns and connections (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). According to Lester, Cho and Lochmiller (2020), data analysis in qualitative studies relies on the emergence of themes from data without pre-construction. The research followed a thematic analysis. In thematic analysis, the researcher examines data and common themes or ideas to come out of the participants repeatedly. The researcher analysed data following guidelines suggested by Braune and Clarke (2006). In following the guidelines, the researcher familiarises her/himself with the data, then generates the codes from the data, searches for themes, reviews themes, names themes and then produces the report.

3.9 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE QUALITATIVE STUDY

According to Shenton (2004), trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to four aspects, credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Neuman (2006) states that ensuring credibility and trustworthiness is a hallmark of qualitative studies. In this study, the researcher ensured that the study was credible and trustworthy through follow-up interviews (Turk, 2009), member-checking (Baxter & Jack, 2008) and the use of an audio recorder during interviews (Zarniawska, 2004).

The aim of trustworthiness in qualitative research is to support the argument that the enquiry's findings are valid (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen & Kyng, 2014). Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research involves ethically conducting research (Merriam, 2009). Issues of credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability were discussed.

Credibility

The degree to which the results accurately reflect the realities and experiences of the participants is referred to as credibility (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Credibility refers to dependability, trustworthiness and expressing a reality that is convincing or seems true (Tracy, 2013). It is one's confidence in the study and findings. When conducting interviews, the researcher employed audio-recording equipment to verify the accuracy of the interviewees' responses. Credibility can be verified through engagement with the participant and persistent observation (Connely, 2016). Qualitative credibility was achieved through thick descriptions and engaging in member reflections with the participants. The researcher ensured credibility by probing when necessary and asking follow-up questions during the interview with the participants.

Dependability

Dependability is the capacity to articulate the reasons for differences between the study's findings and those of previous studies (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Therefore, the researcher can account for variations found in the study. The outcomes of this study were compared with the results of previous studies and where there were variations, the researcher accounted for such variations. Neuman (2011) contends that data should be dependable and consistent.

Conformability

Conformability entails determining if the findings are consistent and could be repeated (Connely, 2016). According to Billups (2014), conformability is crucial since it reflects the participants' perspectives and honesty and fosters trust in the findings.

Transferability

In terms of transferability, it refers to the degree to which the outcomes of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents. According to Anney (2015), the

researcher facilitates the transferability judgement through purposeful sampling. In this research, participants were selected purposefully. The researcher used an audio recorder to record participants' responses during interviews. The audio recorder was used to capture all the participants' responses accurately. It also ensured all the important information had been captured accurately and nothing was missing. There was a follow-up interview (Turk, 2009). After the process of checking interview recordings, it was found that some of the responses were unclear, or the responses seemed to require clarification. In this study, participants were provided with interview scripts so that they could check and verify the accuracy of their responses. The researcher ensured that their responses were accurately captured.

3.10 ETHICAL ISSUES

With regards to ethical issues, the researcher applied to the University of South Africa Ethics Committee for ethical clearance. The researcher proceeded to seek permission from the Limpopo Department of Education to conduct research at its schools. After receiving the letter of permission from the Department of Education, the researcher informed the Circuit Manager of Hlanganani Central Circuit where the research took place.

The researcher provided sampled schools with the consent forms meant for participants. Permission was sought from the school principal, teachers participating in the study, parents of learners in the classes where the research was to be conducted and the learners' assent. This was done to seek their willingness to participate and provide them with their rights during the research. The contents of the forms were explained, and the participants were given enough time to decide, and then sign as an indication of their agreement to take part in the research. According to Miles et al. (2014), issues of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity are vital when doing research. Thus, each participant was contacted, and suitable times and venues were arranged.

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the research approach, design, methodology and details of the selection site and the participants. Data collection and analysis were also discussed. It also expounded on the trustworthiness and credibility of the study and ethical issues. The next chapter presents the findings from interviews, observation and document analysis.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and interprets the data collected through semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis. Interview responses are presented, analysed and interpreted. The use of interviews, observations and document analysis allowed for an in-depth understanding of teaching reading fluency skills in Xitsonga (HL) and for corroboration and comparison of findings. This chapter also presents the biographical information of participants involved in this study and the identified themes, categories and teachers' perspectives regarding the study. The purpose of the study was to explore the teachers' perspectives on the teaching of reading fluency skills in Grade 3 Xitsonga HL. Thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying and organising data into themes (Makieson, *et al.*, 2018), thus, it was used to analyse the data in this study.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The data gathered from the DHs and Grade 3 teachers about their understanding and knowledge of teaching reading fluency skills in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) included information about their gender, age, experiences as teachers and school management. During reading, the researcher observed different methodologies, strategies and skills for teaching reading fluency in Schools A to E.

All the names provided are pseudonyms to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. The table below contains the biographical information about the participants involved in this research study.

Table 4.1 Biographical information about participants

SCHOOL	PARTICIPANTS	QUALIFICATION	GENDER	AGE	EXPERIENCE
School A	TA1	JPTD	Female	57	36
	HA1	STD	Female	47	9
School B	TB1	B.Ed FP	Female	35	6
	HB1	JPTD	Female	50	29
School C	TC1	B.Ed FP	Female	32	4
	HC1	JPTD	Female	51	17
School D	TD1	STD	Female	57	29
	HD1	SPTD	Female	55	27
School E	TE1	B.Ed FP	Male	33	4
	HE1	JPTD	Female	55	29

In terms of gender, there were nine females and one male. The experiences of teachers interviewed in terms of their number of teaching years are summarised in the table above. Table 4.1 shows that six participants had more than twenty years of teaching experience while others had less than twenty years. HB2 and TD1 had more experience while others had less than ten years of teaching experience. Four teachers were above fifty years of age. It can be said that from this study, experience is an advantage in the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase because the more experienced a teacher is, the greater understanding and knowledge they have. This is more beneficial in a working environment, although it is not always the case. A teacher can have more experience in teaching a particular phase, but that does not mean they are the most knowledgeable.

All the participants were qualified teachers but with different areas of specialisation. There were ten participants, three of whom had Junior Primary Teachers Diploma (JPTD) TA1, TA2 and TC2, and had obtained their qualification in the former colleges of education. They were also qualified to teach in the Foundation Phase, Grade 1–Grade 3. There were also three

teachers, TB1, TE1 and TA1, who specialised in teaching in the Foundation Phase, with a Bachelor of Education degree. TA2 and TD1 were qualified to teach in high school, since they had Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD), but were teaching in the Foundation Phase. TD1 specialised in Senior Primary Teachers Diploma (SPTD) and was thus qualified to teach in intermediate and senior phases but had been placed in the Foundation Phase.

In terms of gender, the highest percentage was that of females. Teaching institutions are an extension of home. It is believed that since children are from homes where they are under the care of their parents or guardians, female teachers are more likely to provide motherly love and more care compared to male teachers. Consequently, learners are likely to trust them in the teaching and learning environment. Therefore, female teachers are in the majority than male teachers in the Foundation Phase of this research.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS ACCORDING TO THEMES

The identified themes and categories of teaching reading fluency skills in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) are discussed in detail in the following subsections.

Table 4.2: The identified themes and categories and teachers' perspectives

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	THEME	CATEGORIES	TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVES
1. How do you implement the CAPS document in your teaching of reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?	1. The implementation of curriculum and assessment policy document.	1. The NECT lesson plans.	"NECT lesson plan document helps me to design my lessons."
		2. Allocation of time for reading in Grade 3	"Use a timeframe for 10-15 minutes doing letter sounding and segmentations".
		3. The implementation of the CAPS document and ATP in the teaching of reading.	"The CAPS document is a policy that we must follow. Each teacher must have it. ATPS and tracker

2. How often do Grade 3 teachers use resources in teaching reading?	2. Stages of utilisation of resources in assisting Grade 3 learners to read Xitsonga (HL) fluently	1. Introducing the new learning content	"Resources like pictures and flashcards can be utilised to introduce a new learning content".
		2. During teaching process	"We use resources all the time for our learners"
		3. Creation of print rich environment in the classroom	." I discuss with the teachers that our classes should be full of print as it helps our learners to read"
3. Which methodologies and strategies are understood by teachers in teaching that may contribute towards the attainment of reading fluency in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?	3 Methodologies of teaching reading Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL).	1. Modelling of reading by the teacher.	"I will read the story aloud to model certain reading skills to learners".
		2. Repeated reading.	"We read repeatedly".
		3. Extensive reading	"Learners read a variety of books"
		4. The use of phonics and phonological awareness.	"We sound the phonics which have been done in the morning."
		5. The shared reading strategy in the teaching of reading.	"I use shared reading".
		6. The use of guided reading strategy	"During guided reading, I help them."

4. What hinders learners from reading fluently in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?	.4. Challenges to fluent reading	1. Lack of reading practice.	“Lack of reading practice affects reading fluency.”
		2. Learning styles used by learners.	“Emotional factors and learning styles are also some of the reasons that hinder fluency”.
		3. Lack of vocabulary and phonological awareness.	“I think our learners are very ignorant because when they don’t understand the word, they do not even ask; they read just for the sake of reading. I think the teachers in lower grades did not give them the basics of sounding letters correctly.”
5. How do teachers support learners who cannot read fluently in Grade 3 Xitsonga home language?	5. Aspects to be considered in supporting learners who lack fluency in their reading.	1. Monitoring and support	It is important to monitor and give support to teachers and learners
		2. Use of different strategies of reading	“we support teachers and learners by ensuring that the reading materials are available”
		3. Awards	“ we award learners in different categories including reading”

The themes were aligned with the research questions. An interview schedule was used, and themes were generated from the participants’ responses to the interview.

A discussion of the themes and categories presented above are discussed below.

Table 4.3: The document analysis

Name of the document	Key information	Importance of the document to the study
NECT lesson plans	Scripted lesson plans	The National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) was established in 2015 to assist in improving education in South Africa (NECT, 2021). The NECT programme assists the Department of Education by providing lesson plans for all grades in school, including Grade 3 HL.
CAPS document	The aim of the South African Curriculum as stated in the CAPS document Grade 3 Foundation Phase Xitsonga serves the purpose of equipping learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment and meaningful participation in society, (DoE, 2011).	The CAPS document for Foundation Phase has allocated time for reading and phonics in Grade 3 HL, which is four hours thirty minutes (4h30) per week. It has been divided as follows. Phonics 15 minutes per day for 4 days (1 hour), shared reading 20 minutes per day for 3 days (1 hour), group reading 30 minutes per day (2 groups each for 15 minutes) for 5 days (2 hours 30 minutes), (DoE, 2011).
Annual Teaching Plan (ATP)	COVID-19 has created unprecedented disruptions to the education system across the world. One of the consequences thereof was the reduced time in teaching and learning, resulting in substantial learning losses. The DBE adopted a multi-year curriculum recovery approach.	The recovery curriculum is designed to accommodate the negative impact of COVID-19, and there is an interim deviation from the original curriculum and a transitional arrangement until the policy amendment processes are completed (Circular s13: release for 2021).

Reading books	Resource for reading	<p>How often are reading books used in the classroom?</p> <p>Are there enough books?</p> <p>Are reading books taken and used for home reading?</p>
Other reading resources such as syllabic charts and word cards.	Resource for reading	<p>To check the availability of resources</p> <p>Are resources used in class during reading periods?</p> <p>How often are resources used to teach reading?</p>

The following section presents the themes from the findings and their discussion.

4.4 THEME 1: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CAPS

The implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy document is the first theme to be identified.

4.4.1 NECT lesson plans

Participants were asked to explain how they implemented the CAPS document in their teaching of reading in a classroom situation. Most of the participants reported that they implemented the CAPS policy in their classrooms. They indicated that even though they were provided with a NECT lesson plan document to design their lesson preparations, they still used a CAPS document for content about what to teach in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL). Below are some of their responses:

Teacher TA2 stated that,

“As teachers, when we implement CAPS, the Department of Basic Education provides us with scripted lesson plans. NECT lesson plans help me to design my lessons. I refer and adapt the lesson preparation to suit my learners’ needs”.

The teachers were provided with scripted lesson plans for all Foundation Phase subjects that served as a guide to teach, including the teaching of reading. Therefore, their lesson plan preparations were derived from the NECT document. The lesson plan of Xitsonga HL reading for each strategy and methodology was derived from the NECT document. TB1 shared that:

“We are supplied with NECT lesson plans which have methods of teaching reading. The lesson plans help us design our lesson preparation”.

TB1 further explained that the NECT lesson plans had been designed with content coverage for reading in Grade 3 HL. NECT lesson plans followed the same routine, which was based on the CAPS document (NECT, 2021). The time had been allocated for each reading strategy, shared reading, guided reading and phonics. The resource packs for each term had flashcard words and were provided for the theme vocabulary, high-frequency words, phonic sounds and words. TE2 commented thus:

“We do teach them according to the routine that is given each week in the NECT lesson plan documents such as four times a week we teach phonics, shared reading three times a week and guided reading. But we cannot follow the routine all the time since it does not cover the different learning abilities of all learners.”

The participants revealed that the NECT lesson plan document had a weekly routine that teachers followed to teach reading. The weekly routine served as a guide, and it helped the teachers to know which strategy to implement and which topic to follow. It served as a planner for the week on each subject. The weekly routine indicated what to teach, the time and the day. If the teachers followed the NECT document weekly routine accordingly, they would know what to do in their teaching on reading daily. Most teachers used the NECT lesson plan document during observation. The NECT lesson observation guided the teachers on the phonic sounds and words for the week and how to use DBE workbooks.

4.4.2 Allocation of time for reading

The researcher wanted to find out from the teachers about the allocation of time for reading in Grade 3 classrooms. The participants were asked to respond to this question: *How much time is allocated for reading in Grade 3?* TA2 revealed that:

“Time has been allocated by the timetables which come from the Department, but I am not happy with it because there is a lot to do, especially with learners who are unable to read. We need more time for letter sounding in phonics. Sometimes I do remedial lessons after school, especially for slow learners so that they do not lag.”

The Department of Education provided teachers with a timetable for the Foundation Phase and Grade 3 as well. The timetable availed indicated time for each subject, including teaching time for Xitsonga HL. All Grade 3 teachers were supposed to adhere to the time allocated on the timetable in their teaching of reading. There was time allocated for each strategy of reading.

On the other hand, many teachers did not know the time allocation for teaching reading, hence, they taught randomly. TC1 stated that,

“I use a timeframe of 10-15 minutes doing letter sounding, blending and segmentation of words”.

They taught without checking the time allocated in the CAPS document. Letter sounding and segmentation are part of phonics. The time allocated for phonics in NECT, and CAPS documents was 15 minutes per day. There was no time allocation for 10 minutes for phonics. Furthermore, HC2, added that they had agreed as Foundation Phase teachers that the first two periods on Monday, Tuesday and Friday, were reading periods. As agreed, they dropped all and did reading on said days. Learners read guided by their teachers because some of them were struggling to read. The teachers used a syllabic chart to help with letter sounding. In school C, all Foundation Phase classes taught reading to reduce the number of learners who were unable to read.

TA1 said:

“I allocate time for teaching reading according to the weekly routine of the NECT lesson plan. It is important to use the time allocated by NECT and CAPS documents because if we do not follow it, we will no longer be teaching what is required by the department”.

The participants were very much aware that there was a weekly routine of teaching phonics, shared reading and guided reading and they were supposed to stick to it. However, one of them, TB1, responded in this way:

“It is up to the teacher to make time available for essential activities like shared reading and guided reading. If we follow the timetable blindly, our learners will not cope. I always ensure that I teach until I am convinced and happy that my learners can read with fluency.”

The participant's response indicated that some teachers were not adhering to the time allocation as stipulated by the NECT weekly routine or the CAPS document. Unquestionably, the teachers knew what to teach and at what time because timetables were available in their classrooms. It had been stipulated accordingly in the policy document.

On the other hand, regarding time allocation as per the CAPS document, HD1 responded in this way:

“I have allocated time for teaching reading based on the CAPS document maximum time of 4 hours per week but sometimes we don't adhere to time allocation because some of our learners need assistance in reading, therefore, I spent more time doing sounding and reading so that they can read fluently”.

Based on the response above, the NECT lesson plan document allocated four hours thirty minutes (4h30) per week for teaching reading, and there was time allocated for each reading strategy in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL). The teachers who taught shared reading and phonics used allocated time for the strategies during observation.

4.4.3 CAPS document and Annual Teaching Plan in the teaching of reading

TE1 commented that:

“CAPS is a policy that we must follow while teaching reading”.

Each CAPS policy document is essential for teaching and learning in all subjects taught from Grades R to 12. Each subject has one CAPS policy document that provides guidelines on what needs to be taught and assessed. The aim of the South African Curriculum, as stated in the CAPS Document for Foundation Phase HL, is to equip learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment and meaningful participation in society (DoE, 2011).

Two participants responded negatively about the use of CAPS documents in their teaching of reading. TA2 said *“I had never used the CAPS document in her teaching.”* TA2 had a Secondary Teachers Diploma and had been placed in the Foundation Phase because, during her appointment, there were no Foundation Phase teachers. She said:

“I have never used it [CAPS] when teaching reading; I have no time for it. I have not used the CAPS document because I do not have it in my class. I have not seen anyone using it at school. I only use the NECT document because it is our lesson plan. CAPS document and NECT are the same, so I believe by following NECT, I am also following CAPS”.

HA1 taught learners using NECT documents and had never used the CAPS document in her teaching of reading. Most teachers interviewed reported that the CAPS policy document was a tool that had to be followed daily by all teachers. TE1 followed the CAPS Xitsonga HL when teaching reading because,

“CAPS document gives detailed guidelines on what to teach daily, such as listening and speaking, phonics, shared reading, guided reading and handwriting”.

The teachers interviewed contended that they used the CAPS document in their teaching of reading. CAPS was a tool that had to be followed. On the other hand, some participants like

TA2 and TB2 had no access to the CAPS policy document and had never used it in their teaching of reading. TB2 claimed thus:

“I teach reading according to the NECT lesson plan with ATP and pacesetter. I also utilise tracker.”

The statement shows that the teachers did not even have a policy document; they relied only on the NECT lesson plans that had been provided. TC1 said,

“I think ATPs are derived from the Policy document, therefore, we must use them accordingly”.

NECT lesson plans were derived from the CAPS document, thus the ATP. NECT, CAPS and ATP were supposed to correlate, and the information found on one was also found on the other. Consequently, all teachers ought to have a CAPS document, NECT lesson plans and preparation and ATP because they are congruently interconnected. The participants were familiar with the policy as it gave them direction on teaching reading and other components of teaching.

COVID-19 caused a huge disruption to the education system across the globe (Circular 13 of DBE, 2021). As a result, time for teaching and learning was reduced. To recover the time lost during COVID-19 lockdowns, the Department of Education started a curriculum recovery approach. The ATPs were derived from CAPS documents to assist in closing the gap caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

TA1 stated that:

“I implement CAPS document using five components of reading, which are vocabulary, comprehension, phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, together with reading strategies, shared reading and independent reading”.

TE2 indicated that she implemented five components of reading when teaching because they related to each other, and it was impossible to teach one and leave the others.

4.5 THEME 2: STAGES OF UTILISATION OF RESOURCES IN ASSISTING GRADE 3 LEARNERS TO READ XITSONGA (HL) FLUENTLY

The following categories were identified and elaborated by participants. The participants were asked how often they use resources in the teaching of Xitsonga (HL) in Grade 3 class.

4.5.1 Introducing the new learning content

The teachers gave different responses to the research question of how often they use resources in the teaching of reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL). TA1 responded and stated that:

“I use resources all the time in my class because Grade 3 learners cannot be able to read fluently if I do not use resources. When I introduce the new learning content while I teach phonics, I will also give examples by using flashcards. The cards make the lesson to be interesting”.

On the other hand, TDI stated that she uses word cards and pictures while introducing a new storybook. She stated that”

“The learners in my class seem to be jubilant and listen attentively when we do picture walks, and when I introduce a new storybook. We start by looking at the cover and we do picture walk and ask questions and they will predict by looking at the pictures what the story is about”.

The teachers responded that they use resources most of the time while teaching reading in their classes. TE1 stated that in her school, they buy charts for them to help them make their resources which are suitable and related to their lesson, thus:

“We cannot rely on the Department of Education to provide everything for us. We have been taught years back at the college how to make neat cards which will help learners learn appropriately in class. I use teaching aids all the time because learners understand more by manipulating different objects in the class. Sometimes I can teach a lesson which is not related to our environment, for example, when we talk about visiting the zoo. Some learners

have never been to the zoo, thus, as the teacher, I must introduce my lesson by ensuring that I have pictures of the five big animals, which are related to my lesson”.

Moreover, TCI stated:

“We cannot do anything without teaching aids. Resources like pictures and flashcards can be utilised to introduce new learning content”.

4.5.2 During teaching process

The teachers gave different opinions on how often they use resources in their classes to teach reading of Xitsonga (HL). Many teachers argue that they use resources all the time. They explicitly explained that all the resources in Grade 3 must be used all the time.

HD1 responded by stating that:

“DBE workbooks are part of the resources which must be used without fail in our classes. As the DH, I realised that some teachers neglect to use DBE workbooks for reading and writing. During class visits, I ensure that learners also read from DBE workbooks, and I also tell the teachers during phase meetings that DBE workbooks must be used following the routine stipulated by the NECT lesson plans to benefit our learners by reading fluently. DBE workbooks are interesting as they are colourful and have a good font suitable for their grade.”

On the other hand, in answering the research question, how often do teachers use resources in the teaching of reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL), TE1, indicated that resources are part and parcel of teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase, thus,

“We cannot teach without resources in our class. The learners in Grade 3 learn by manipulating and viewing different objects. As their home language teacher, I ensure that I come to class fully prepared with different resources. In Grade 3, we read poems and fiction and non-fiction books. We use resources all the time for our learners. Even for bright learners, I give them more reading books to enhance their capacity to read and comprehend large texts.

In addition, HC1 stated that all learners should use resources in the class depending on their reading capability, thus,

“I use resources all the time, some learners still need syllabic charts to catch up as they are still lagging. I also give them for use at home, for reading for enjoyment and homework.”

4.5.3 Creation of print-rich environment in the classroom

On the other hand, Grade 3 teachers while responding to the use of resources in the classes indicated that the Foundation Phase class must look bright and interesting. TDI argue that:

“I don’t need a dull class. My class always looks bright. My class is colourful, and many learners in my class are interested in reading. I have a reading corner with different storybooks. I award well-behaved learners with a book, and they sit in the corner and read for enjoyment”.

Moreover, HB1, a DH in school B also emphasised the importance of print print-rich environment in Grade 3. HB1, stated that:

“How can we expect a Grade 3 learner to read fluently if we do not prepare our classes for reading? In phase meetings, I discuss with the teachers that our classes should be full of print as it helps our learners to read. The wall in our classes must be pasted with charts of poems, short stories, words and syllabic charts to cater for all learners.”

Furthermore, TE1 added that the Foundation Phase is a basis for learning, and it must be strong:

“I believe that in the Foundation phase, we must create a strong basis for learning. If our learners are unable to read, it means that the foundation is full of cracks and cannot stand the test of time. As they proceed to higher grades, they will drop out if the foundation is not solid. Our class must be full of print; it will create a solid rock on which they will be able to excel in life as good readers who will read with fluency and be able to comprehend written text”.

On the other hand, HD1 commented on the use of resources in Grade 3 and emphasised that the school also provide resources for effective learning and teaching in the school.

HD1 shared the same sentiments as HB1 thus:

“I provide resources for the teachers in Grade 3 and they should use them always”.

TEI shared the same sentiments as the above teachers that the Grade 3 class must be conducive to teaching and learning. Therefore, teachers need to create a conducive environment for reading by assisting learners with different resources all the time.

4.6 THEME 3: METHODOLOGIES OF TEACHING READING GRADE 3 XITSONGA (HL)

The participants were asked about the methodologies and strategies they used to teach reading. The following categories were identified:

4.6.1 Modelling of reading by the teacher

Throughout the interviews, the participants revealed that they read to the learners. They read aloud to help learners who were struggling to read fluently. The use of modelling reading to learners was a common strategy among the teachers interviewed. When asked what they could do to support learners who could not read fluently, TA1 said:

“I encourage learners to read. I will read for them and explain vocabulary words. There are many new words which they are not familiar with as a result I need to explain to them. Many vocabulary words are found in the DBE workbooks and learners are not familiar with some of them. As technology has advanced, there are many borrowed words from English that we use nowadays which are unfamiliar to learners. I read with expression. This will make my learners to be interested in reading.”

After reading, the teacher asked questions to ensure that the learners comprehended the text or story and for clarity. During the researcher’s observation of the lesson, it was noted that

TA1 read the book together with the learners. She selected five learners randomly to read aloud to the class. The learners could read with speed and comprehension.

TE1 responded:

“I read the story aloud to model certain skills to learners. I read from top to bottom, from left to right, respond appropriately to punctuation marks, and read fluently at a good pace and voice expression.”

Teachers indicated that they modelled reading to learners. Apart from modelling, they did pre-reading activities, which included introducing new vocabulary and explaining difficult words to learners.

In School B, it was observed that HB1 started teaching by reading a syllabic chart with the learners to introduce the title to the learners. The learners had their copies of the syllabic chart with digraph and trigraph syllables. She prepared word cards with words such as *swimanga, mukhegula, nkukulu, chavisa, xinyami*. Learners read and segmented the words by clapping and putting emphasis on the syllables. She taught shared reading using DBE workbooks. Each learner had a copy of the DBE workbook. She started with pre-reading activities. Learners predicted what would happen by looking at the title. The title was *Swimanganyana swimbirhi*. In the pre-reading activities, TB2 asked the learners to read the word *swimanganyana*, and further asked the learners where the word came from. The response was *Swimanganyana* comes from *swimanga*. Learners were able to form new vocabulary words from the ending sounds, *timanga, manga, and ximanga*. She modelled reading to learners and they also read together.

There was a reading ability group in School B. TB1 allowed six learners to read aloud. Four learners read with fluency while the other two were struggling. During the observation, there was evidence of a print-rich environment in most classes. All Grade 3 classes had a syllabic chart.

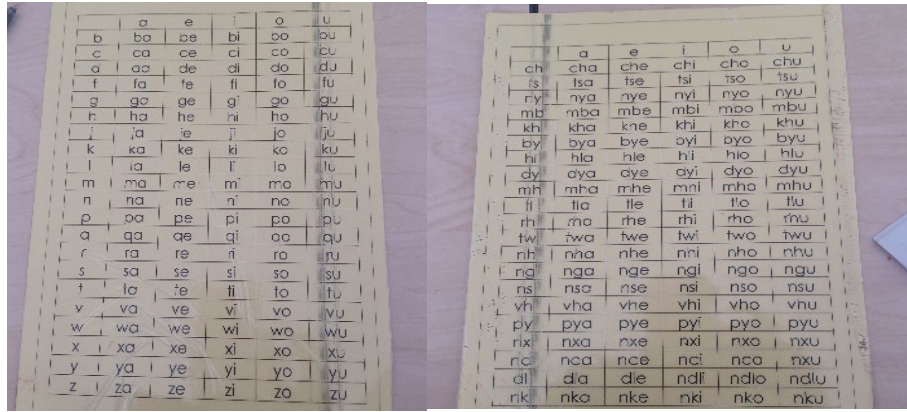


Figure 4.1 Syllable charts for learners

On the other hand, in answering the question on how she helped learners who were lagging behind in reading, TC1 said:

“Most learners in my class have basic letter sounding but I always teach as if they do not know because learners have different learning abilities. I sound letters of the alphabet with the learners effectively and efficiently. Learners must know that each finger represents a vowel sound. We start with the index finger. Learners close their hands and open as they sound from their index fingers a, e, i, o, u. I tell them that the vowel sounds are the keys. We sound consonants, add vowels and sound it. We emphasise the sound of vowels on each syllable, for example,

	A	E	I	O	U
<i>Mb</i>	<i>Mba</i>	<i>Mbe</i>	<i>Mbi</i>	<i>Mbo</i>	<i>Mbu</i>
<i>Rh</i>	<i>Rha</i>	<i>Rhe</i>	<i>Rhi</i>	<i>Rho</i>	<i>Rhu</i>
<i>Hl</i>	<i>Hla</i>	<i>Hle</i>	<i>Hli</i>	<i>Hlo</i>	<i>Hlu</i>

After repetition of the syllables sounding, learners start to form words with learners, e.g., mbuti, rhamba, rhanga, mbambela, rirhangu, hlamba. I read with the learners, and they repeat different words and sounds, putting emphasis on the vowel sounding. Later, they can form sentences and read them fluently as they will be already fluent in vocabulary.”

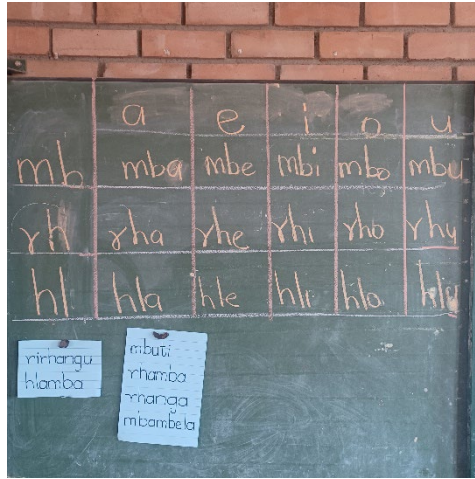


Figure 4.2 Using syllables to form new vocabulary words.

Creating a conducive learning environment is good for reading. The learners must be in a free environment without being intimidated by the teacher, thus TA1 responded thus:

“I will create a free environment where learners can be free to read, and I will model reading to them,”.

Learners are motivated to read as they watch their teacher modelling reading to them. Learners must be free to communicate with their teachers without fear or intimidation. Teachers need to create a free environment for reading to take place.

TA1, TE1, TC1 and HC1 indicated that they modelled reading by using gestures and facial expressions and paused accordingly. That way, learners will be able to emulate them and become good readers. As they watch their teachers, they will acquire new reading skills, which help them to reach fluency, as indicated by TA1:

“Helping the learners to improve reading fluency, learners must know that reading should sound like they are talking, reading with expression and gestures”.

HC1 indicated that she read aloud to the learners using different storybooks:

“I read aloud different stories to them. Reading for enjoyment is good and I want to instil the love of reading in my learners”.

Most of the teachers interviewed modelled reading in shared reading. It is important to read stories aloud to learners. Through shared reading, learners are provided with opportunities to expand their vocabulary. Learners read by sharing the text with someone more knowledgeable, their teacher. It provides learners with the opportunities to read new and difficult words as they read together with the teacher. Consequently, it boosts their confidence and helps them to read with fluency and enjoyment.

4.6.2 Repeated reading

According to the findings from Grade 3 teachers who were interviewed, repeated reading was one of the methods of teaching reading fluency skills. Some learners read fluently in Grade 3 classes while others struggled to read with fluency. Teachers came up with strategies to help learners to read with fluency in their classes. When asked to explain how they implemented the strategies to assist learners to read fluently, TC1 highlighted that:

“The targeted group will attend reading lessons. During the lesson, they read the same text several times. I use syllable charts. I design three syllable charts for all the learners in class. On the first syllables chart, I write single graph syllables from the first consonant b to the last consonant z in alphabetically, for example, ka ke, ki, ko, ku. The second chart is for digraphs where I write kwa kwe kwi. The third chart is for trigraphs and more complex syllables, for example, khwa, khwe, khwi. Suppose we want to learn about the word `khwati`, I tell them to look for `khwa` on the third chart. The learner will place her finger on the syllable sound and find khwa. The learner will also look for `ti` on the single graph syllable chart. When she puts the two syllables sound together, she will get the word `khwati`. They read the word repeatedly. We will continue looking for new words with the same sound or as directed.”

TC1 further explained that the syllabic method helped learners to write their sentences using more complex words and sentences. She gave an example:

‘Tihomu ta tatana ti lahlekile ekhwatini lero tlhuma,’ (My father’s cows were lost in the thick forest).

After reading and building more complex words, it is then they will be able to form sentences and ultimately paragraphs. They will read the paragraphs repeatedly to attain fluency.

The data collected suggests that repeated reading is one of the skills that can help learners reach fluency in reading. Learners were given the same text to read several times until they were able to decode and blend words accordingly and ultimately gain fluency. On the other hand, HC1 stated that:

“The learners drill sight words and I ask them to repeat several times”.

The teacher asked learners to read the sight words and repeat them several times to attain fluency. Learners read the same passage over and over until they became fluent. In answering the question on the methodologies used to help learners who are struggling to read, HB1 said:

“At the beginning of the first quarter, I did not follow the ATP nor the NECT lesson plans while teaching Xitsonga reading. I have many years of experience as a Grade 3 teacher. I start from the bottom and sound vowels and consonant letters. I know learners have already done basic letter sounding, but for my learners to be fluent in reading, I start at the bottom. The whole first term, we build vocabulary words with learners. We do a repetition of sounds and build words until learners are fluent in letter sounding. Then in the second term, we start making sentences because they are familiar with letter sounding and building of vocabulary words.”

Learners read the letter sounding repeatedly until they read it fluently. It is then that they could use the sound to build words. On the other hand, HB2 responded that she started by teaching the learners syllables where vowels are added to consonants alphabetically. Furthermore, when asked about the methodologies she used to teach reading fluency, TD1 responded that she used repeated reading on the same text. The learners who struggled to read were given one text and they read it repeatedly until they gained fluency. When asked about the method of teaching that can be used to teach reading, HE1 advised:

“We use different methods like repeated reading; it helps to read as they read the same texts several times.”

The responses from the participants on repeated reading indicated that some teachers use it as a methodology to help learners attain reading fluency. The teachers who were interviewed helped the learners to repeat the same reading in a way that would be beneficial to the learners.

4.6.3 Shared reading

The responses revealed that shared reading was used by most teachers interviewed. It was one of the methods that most participants understood even though it was used differently. Some teachers started by telling learners to sit on the mat. The participants responded that the whole class would come together and sit on the mat to be able to see the big book clearly.

In School D, there was TD1 who had big books in her class, and she used them for shared reading. The teacher modelled reading. She asked learners to read the words written on the chalkboard. They read vocabulary words repeatedly. The teacher also explained the meaning of the words because some words were borrowed from English. Learners were unfamiliar with them and as such, they needed to be explained for more understanding. If the words were unexplained, learners would use them wrongly. The lesson was more focused on pre-reading activities where learners read vocabulary words only. The class was not given a chance to read the whole story. The teacher selected five learners to read who read without stammering and had confidence. They read words with automaticity and speed; only one learner was stammering.

TD1 stated that:

“After baseline assessment, I can be able to identify fluent learners and those who need assistance. I don’t use a textbook at the beginning of the year. We write on the chalkboard and read with learners. At the beginning of our reading, I use sentences that are familiar to the environment which they come from before we go to complex reading. We write sentences about our family. For example, Manana u ka mati; Manana u ka mati epompini; Manana u ka mati yo sweka epompini; Tatana u aka yindlu; Tatana u aka yindlu yo saseka; Tatana u aka yindlu yo saseka ya rhandzavula. The same sentences are extended. In this way, learners are becoming more fluent as they build more complex sentences. It is then that we can do creative writing, and they write paragraphs and read more complex texts.”

Moreover, HD1 said:

“Big books are perfect for shared reading with the whole class or a group. DBE workbooks are for phonic, language and reading text, but I also use DBE workbooks for shared reading because the NECT books are aligned with the workbooks. There are also syllable charts for learners.”

HA1 also said that she shared reading with the whole class on a mat around a big book. Meanwhile, some teachers said that they taught shared reading while learners were seated at their desks. If the class size was small, it became easier for them to sit together on a mat. Shared reading books or enlarged texts were put on the easel for every learner to see clearly. Some participants responded that they started with a pre-reading activity like vocabulary words so that learners could understand ambiguous words as they would be explained and read. It would be easier for learners to read with fluency as they would have already read and understood difficult words.

TA1 stated that:

“I don’t have the big books in my class. But I do share reading with them using pamphlets which I have photocopied for each learner. I do not always follow what the Department guides us to do through NECT while my learners I still struggling. I always take one hour in class doing intensive reading every morning. We will be repeating and sharing the same text over and over. After a while, I can find that some of the learners are reading. This is the skill that I am using in my class. Sometimes I find it difficult to follow the timetable while my learners are struggling to read.”

The teacher stated that any reading material could be used for shared reading with the learners. She used a passage while doing shared reading. She indicated that learners must be allowed to read various materials. The most important thing was that the learners could read, not about the resources they were using. The reading material needed to be clear and visible. When the teacher read, learners would be able to follow easily as they read together. Teachers also enlarged texts on the board or wrote on the charts to prepare learners for shared reading.

In School E, TE1 had a multi-grade class. TE1 taught shared reading by calling learners to sit on the mat. He had no big books, but learners used DBE workbooks. He modelled reading to the learners. Pre-reading activities were done by asking learners to talk about illustrations. The title was *Vana lavantshwa exikolweni xa hina (New children in our school)*. The teacher wrote the word *lavantshwa(new)* on the chalkboard and asked learners to break it into syllables, *la/va/ntshwa*. They clapped three times according to the syllables. TE1 identified more words from the text and learners segmented them and read, *muchayina, (Chinese) mu/cha/yi/na, namuntlha (today), na/mu/ntlha*. After pre-reading activities, six learners were selected randomly to read aloud, and four of them read with fluency. TE1 also practised intensive reading by awarding the fluent readers more books to read on their own, for independent reading. During the observation of reading lessons, most learners were able to read with fluency.

TE1 said that the picture walk was also important because it made learners understand the story. TA1 and teacher TE1 stated that they did pre-reading activities like picture-talk before they read. The learners talked about the pictures page by page, which helped them to understand the story when they read. The participants added that they asked learners to look at the illustrations as they predicted what would happen in the story. That way, learners became more interested and inquisitive about the story and helped them to read and comprehend the text. Furthermore, they did pre-reading activities where they discussed the title and the author. The teachers said that learners needed to know what the title was about, as it gave a clear picture of what the story was all about. Five of the teachers interviewed said that they did pre-reading activities in the shared reading lesson.

HA1 put it this way:

“Pre-reading is a time for vocabulary and development of learner’s focus on words in the pictures. I prepare flash cards with vocabulary words, and we read with learners.”

The participants said that one of the pre-reading activities was vocabulary development. It was essential for the learners to start with pre-reading such as vocabulary words to enable them to pronounce and understand ambiguous words. It would be easier for learners to read with fluency as they would have already read and understood difficult words. TA1 stated that she explained vocabulary words to learners before they read and expressed all the motions happening as she read the story. She further indicated that a pre-reading activity was where

she introduced new vocabulary words and explained them to the learners. The learning of new vocabulary words improved reading fluency. The teacher taught vocabulary words first before they read together in the first stage of shared reading.

HC1 elaborated thus:

“Firstly, we read vocabulary which deals with comprehension. In my class, I always encourage the learners to read aloud which will also build their confidence. We read aloud vocabulary words before reading the comprehension. I allow learners to do the segmentation of words to check their reading. I do understand what the NECT guides us to do in shared reading. Sometimes I randomly select learners to read aloud as an individual to assess their reading. Shared reading sometimes makes learners to be lazy, especially those who are unable to read. They just memorise and open their mouths as if they are reading meanwhile, they are not.”

After encountering and understanding difficult words, HC1’s learners were provoked to read with comprehension. Learners need to comprehend the text or the story by reading accurately. Learners must show the ability to process the text and understand its meaning by reading fluently. The participants modelled reading to the learners by reading aloud. On the other hand, there was follow-up reading where the teacher read aloud to learners, and they also did shared reading. Likewise, HD1 and HB1 hinted, respectively:

“On the NECT, learners are supposed to read the story once after vocabulary reading. In my class, we read the story from the DBE several times, and I allow learners to read in groups and pairs so that I can be able to identify those who cannot read with fluency. I read aloud, and learners read after me. I also identify learners who can read and group them.”

“When we do shared reading, on the first day we read vocabulary words with learners. We identify difficult words, we read, and we also segment them into syllables. The following day we read the enlarged text, or I write the paragraph on the chalkboard then we read together with the learners, whole class and in groups.”

When asked about how they taught shared reading, HC1 and TE1 explained their shared reading steps similarly. Most of the participants responded that they did reading activities like vocabulary, picture walks and engaging learners in discussion.

Thereafter, they read the whole text with the learners. A few participants said that they just read the whole text with the learners without any pre-reading activities.

At the end of the shared reading, the participants did many activities to consolidate the lesson. There were two responses regarding post-reading activities, as stated by HD1 and TB1, respectively:

“There are many activities that we do in class after reading. I check learners if they can read by reading aloud to the class to assess their fluency and asking oral questions to check their understanding. They can also dramatise the story”.

“The teacher will allow learners to explain the story and they can also draw any activity in the story.”

4.6.4 Extensive reading

Teachers and departmental heads were asked what could be done to help learners read fluently. Jeon and Day (2016) proffer that extensive reading is a way in which learners can learn to read and with a great amount of reading for pleasure. Extensive reading has positive inputs on the improvement of reading fluency and vocabulary. All the schools had been supplied with reading books, big books in Xitsonga and *Vulabula* books and small books in Xitsonga although it depended on the teachers whether to use small books for extensive reading or rely only on workbooks.

HE1 understood extensive reading thus,

“Extensive reading is when a learner reads a paragraph or a text and processes it to acquire or gain knowledge, and it can be read for enjoyment. The process must comprehend what the text is about.

In School E, TE1 appreciated fluent reading by giving good remarks to the learners. She also appreciated the learner who read with fluency by rewarding her with a new reading book to read independently:

“Extensive reading is where we give learners a variety of reading books, one after another. The learner must read for enjoyment. There are many books in the class supplied by the department, we give these books for learners to read for enjoyment after completing their task while others are still writing. Sometimes I reward them with books for good behaviour. I also allow learners to read extensively while I’m busy with another group. A learner chose a book to read for pleasure”.

When asked about the methodologies of teaching reading fluency, TD1 responded thus;

“I make use of the variety of books and materials, and I also use different font and text sizes to make reading funnier.”

If learners were exposed to diverse kinds of literature, reading would be fun, and they would ultimately become fluent. Furthermore, HD1 also said that learners must be supported and motivated to do better. Motivation is a key to successful reading.

“Reading must be fun, and learners must be exposed to a variety of books. I have many Xitsonga books in the class, so I give them to learners to read for enjoyment. The books have illustrations and good font suitable for grade three. Sometimes I use the books for guided reading because they are small”.

When asked about how often Grade 3 teachers used resources in the teaching of reading, TA1, a departmental head, stated that;

“Teachers make use of a variety of books and materials. Reading a variety of books enables the learners to grasp new information and gain new vocabulary”.

According to Bui and Macalister (2021), extensive reading encourages learners to freely choose easy-to-read reading materials that match their interests. Learners must read as much as possible. There were a few responses on extensive reading. Throughout the interviews, the researcher got responses about extensive reading from TA1, TD1, TE1 and HE1. Extensive reading is one of the methodologies that can be used to teach reading fluency. Learners should be given a variety of books to read extensively. If learners use the DBE workbook only, some may merely memorise it, which can create boredom among the learners.

4.6.5 The use of phonics and phonological awareness

It was found that in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) teachers used phonics and phonemic awareness to teach learners to read. When asked what they were going to do to help learners read with fluency, TD1 said that she used phonemic awareness and phonics. Learners would repeat the sound until they could 'sound' it excellently. TC2 said:

"The use of the syllables starts in grade one, but I know that some of the learners are still struggling to read fluently. I prepare a chart at the beginning of the year where we drill the syllables with all learners. The syllables help us to build words. For example, we start with a single graph /ta/, /te/, /ti/, /to/ /tu/. We build words, /tana/, /tele/, /titimela/, /tolo/, /tuva/. Then we continue to diagraph, we can form letter patterns and have words like /tlanga/, /tleketla/, /tlimba/, /tlokola/, /tlula/. Learners come out with their own words as they become familiar with the sound. It is then we can process more complex words of trigraph. Most importantly, learners can build more complex words if they get used to triagraph and more, /ntlhanu/, /ntlhohe/, /ntlhantlha/, /namuntlha/, /ntlhontlho/. A learner who struggles with a single graph



Figure 4.3 Phonic words.

will find it difficult to read diagraphs or trigraphs. Learners can segment words and become syllables, /na/, /mu/, /ntlha/. Learners who can segment words are also able to read and those who cannot segment words are unable to read. The more they build words, the more fluent they become."

Learners without a good basic letter sounding find it difficult to read fluently. TD2 also indicated that a syllable chart was very important in Grade 3. Some learners were still struggling to read; therefore, they needed segmentation of words. During the observation, the segmentation of words into syllables was one of the skills used by many teachers to teach reading fluency. Phonics was one of the reading strategies found in the CAPS document and NECT lesson plans to be used in Grade 3. According to the weekly routine, phonics was to be taught three times a day. The participants were asked to explain how they utilised resources in assisting learners to read. TC1 indicated that:

“I use DBE workbooks for phonic activities.”

The DBE books were used by the participants to assist in assessing learners’ phonemic awareness. When asked about how fluent Grade 3 learners in her school were, HC1, a departmental head said:

“There are learners who are not fluent in my class, and they need a phonic method to be applied to them, and the syllables chart must be available, and learners must read daily.”

The researcher observed the teaching of Xitsonga (HL) reading in School C. The school had no big Xitsonga books. The learners used Xitsonga DBE workbooks for reading. HC1 modelled reading to the learners by reading a story. After that, HC1 taught vocabulary words. They segmented the words and sounded the syllables. They repeated reading the sound syllables and vocabulary words. The learners read the text together with their teacher and from the same text, she selected one sound and did phonics. Learners came up with more words of the same sound, and they read together. Then, HC1 randomly selected five learners to read aloud. The learners read with fluency, and only one was stammering. After reading, they wrote using phonics words. Therefore, according to HC1, phonics was one of the methods that could assist Grade 3 learners to read with fluency.

“I use phonic, I instruct them most of the time to read the word and sound it. We segment the word so that learners can understand every sound on it”.

Furthermore, HC1 emphasised that although she was teaching Grade 3, she started with letter sounding because some learners were still struggling to read, and they needed

assistance with letter sounding. The responses above indicate that phonics was another strategy that could be used to help learners read with fluency. HD1 also said:

“I do phonic activities with learners using the NECT document.”

Furthermore, HC1 when asked about the methodologies she used for learners to read with fluency, HA1 said that she used phonemic awareness and phonics for teaching reading fluency skills:

“I do have fluent readers because when I teach phonics, we sound out each letter and I show them that sound is combined and different sounds, but they are combined to make one sound. I start with phonemic awareness to check if they know letter sounding.”

TA1 said that most learners were fluent readers in her class because they sounded each letter when she taught phonics. Therefore, phonics was one of the strategies she used to teach reading in her class. She further said that she started with phonemic awareness to check letter sounding. The use of syllables is a skill that is used by many teachers to teach reading in Grade 3. The responses on the strategies of teaching reading fluency skills revealed that phonics helps assist learners to read with fluency. The NECT document has a weekly routine that indicates what to teach and shows the phonemic sound for each week.

4.6.6 Guided reading

According to the CAPS document, guided reading is one of the strategies that can be used by teachers to read with fluency. When asked about the methodologies and strategies that help learners to read fluently, TA1 said:

“I use guided reading as a strategy which can help learners to read fluently”.

HD1 responded on how she helped learners who are lagging behind in reading:

“In our school, we have no problem with sounds because we do syllable charts from Grade One. Sometimes some new learners are admitted to our schools who were learning in other languages as their home language, like Tshivenda and Sepedi and have relocated to our place. I guide them on how to read with fluency. I start with letter sounding and we sound

aloud. Then, I randomly select syllables according to what I want to teach. For example, /ba/, /be/, /bi/, /bo/, /bu/; /na/, /ne/, /ni/, /no/, /nu/; /ta/, /te/, /ti/, /to/ /tu/. After sounding the syllables with learners, we start to form words, bana, tana, tona, banana, and tatana. We will continue to form new words and read them aloud. We will continue sounding and move to more difficult syllables as we progress with new learning.”

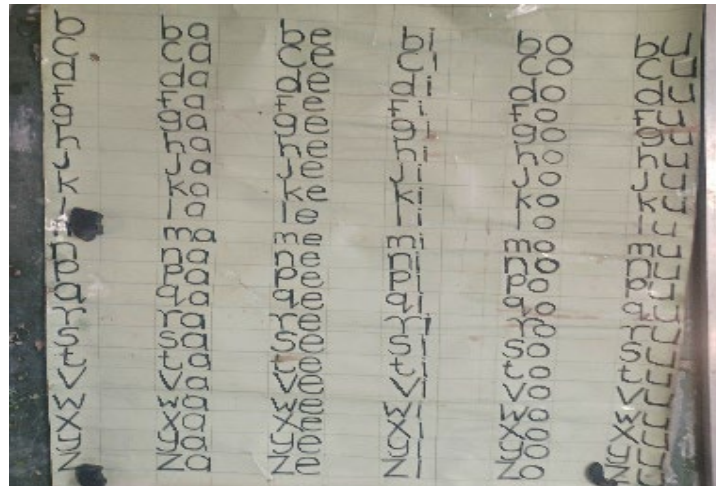


Figure 4.4 Syllable chart in class

The data collected revealed that a few teachers used guided reading in their teaching of reading fluency skills. Many teachers were not workshopped about using guided reading to teach reading fluency. TD1 taught learners how to read silently, and after reading, she asked questions to check on their understanding:

“I use guided reading because, in Grade 3, learners read silently. I ask them questions to see what they understand. I guide them and check their understanding.”

TE1 also used guided reading in his teaching of reading. He developed strategies to help learners with reading fluency. He further said that through the guided reading of books, learners also learnt through repeated reading as they read the same story until they attained fluency.

“During guided reading, I help them. I encourage them to read for fun with their peers. I also do that so that they love reading. I make sure that they do one story many times until they get used to it”.

The data collected revealed little evidence of the use of guided reading as a strategy for teaching reading. The teachers did not get enough support for the use of guided reading. Even the workshops conducted were not enough.

4.7 THEME 4: CHALLENGES TO FLUENT READING

Some challenges hindered learners from reading with fluency. Challenges can be intrinsic or distinct. The intrinsic challenges included the lack of phonological awareness, vocabulary size and decoding skills. Some learners had reading disabilities and found it difficult to read. Other distinct challenges were related to teaching methodologies and strategies, as well as poor teaching skills and a lack of commitment.

4.7.1 Lack of reading practice

One of the challenges experienced by participants was the lack of reading practice, as TD1 confirmed:

“Lack of reading practice affects reading fluency. Learners are not given enough time at school and home to do reading. We practice reading in my class. Learners must be given time to read aloud. I asked learners to read the whole passage or story, and then I put emphasis on the paragraphs. For example, I can say read the first sentence in the second paragraph. Then, I take out one sentence and we read it. Manana Baloyi u xava chukele evhengeleni. (Mrs Baloyi buys sugar at the shop). Learners must be able to say the number of words in a sentence. Then we read, Manana/ Baloyi/ u/ chela / chukele/ etiyeni. (Mrs Baloyi pours sugar in the tea.) Learners will be able to say there are six words in a sentence. After that, they do segmentation of the words into syllables, ma/na/na, ba/lo/yi, /che/la, chu/ke/le, e/ti/ye/ni. Learners play and manipulate each syllable and read out aloud. Break down and sound each vowel in each word. Learners sound out; ch. Learners read the passage and come out with words like, chela, chukela, chulula, chikinya, cheleta, and chavisa. Learners read aloud and segment the words. If they can read the words fluently, they will be able to read the sentences and paragraphs fluently”.



Figure 4.5 Phonics words and pictures.

Learners must be given quality time for reading as documented in CAPS and NECT documents. If not, it will be difficult for them to read with comprehension and fluency. When interviewed about hindrances to reading fluency, TE1 said that insufficient time for reading, and a lack of reading practice were the causes. TE1 went on to say:

“Teachers have no time for reading; they are always busy trying to follow the NECT lesson plan daily routine while the learners are unable to read. We need to make time as teachers to teach reading skills so that the learners can read with fluency”.

The learners were supposed to read at school and at home. Learners had no time for schoolwork at home and were thus unmotivated to read. TA1 affirmed the foregoing by saying:

“Our learners are very lazy; they have no time for books when they reach home.”

HC1 said that learners were always busy with their cell phones and rarely read at home. Instead, they played games and watched cartoon networks on television. Rather than using gadgets like cell phones to benefit them, they do the opposite. Learners must be motivated to watch educational channels that will benefit them and help to focus on schoolwork.

4.7.2 Diverse Learning styles

Learning style was cited as another hindrance to fluent reading by participants. Many learning styles were identified by participants. HB1 stated that Grade 3 learners faced challenges in terms of fluent reading because their learning styles did not resonate with the methodologies and strategies used by teachers when teaching reading. Learning styles entail the methodologies by which learners learn in class. A learning style can be visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. Learners who learn visually should be supported with different resources such as pictures and flashcards to organise their thoughts and improve their reading. Auditory learners learn through hearing. They prefer to listen; the teacher needs to model reading to the learners. Kinaesthetic learners use their whole bodies, including gestures when communicating. Therefore, it is important to be taught in the way they best understand.

HB1 and HE1 identified a lack of previous knowledge as a factor that hindered reading fluency. The teachers in Grades 1 and 2 needed to equip learners with foundational reading skills as they build them up from the unknown to the known. Therefore, there should be a link between the unknown and the known. According to the CAPS document, the progression of learners' content from each grade shows a progression from simple to complex (DoE, 2011). Learners' content should move from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract. TC1 revealed:

“Learners have no basic letter sounding in lower grades, as Grade Three teachers we must always start afresh; we must revise letter sounding to help our learners read fluently”.

Strategies and methodologies that teachers use in class can either help learners to be fluent readers or they can be a hindrance to their reading. There were teaching practices that were identified by the participants as hindrances to fluent reading. HB1 said:

“Learners must have the basics in phonics from Grade 1. Learners must start with a single letter sound. Learners in Grade Three must do digraphs or trigraphs and more for them to have fluency.”

In addition, TD1 stated that teachers hinder reading fluency because of poor skills in teaching reading and a lack of commitment. TC1 added that teachers have no time for teaching reading as they are often busy with paperwork.

“We concentrate more on paperwork than teaching reading. Time for teaching reading is not enough on learners as the school management team needs submission on time”.

TE2, TC1 and TB1 said that teachers needed to create a conducive learning environment to enable learners to read freely and be exposed to books. HC1 mentioned emotional factors as the causes of challenges to fluent reading. The loss of loved ones, anger, fear and sadness were some of the emotional factors that hindered reading fluency among Grade 3 learners, according to HC1. Therefore, there was a need to mitigate these factors as they had a bearing on the reading fluency of the learners.

4.7.3 Lack of vocabulary and phonological skills

TC1, TA1 and HD1 identified a lack of vocabulary and phonological skills as challenges to reading fluency. HD1 stated that a:

“Majority of learners cannot sound the letters of the alphabet which leads to them memorising the words instead of having the knowledge which will help them to read any word which they come across. Secondly, learners lack vocabulary, when they come across an unfamiliar word, it makes the text difficult to read fluently.”

TE1 said that some learners in his class could not read with fluency. When answering questions on the challenges of reading fluency skills, he said:

“When I realised that some of the class could not read with fluency, I started to do syllables charts to build their vocabulary. As we build syllables, we put more emphasis on the sounding of vowels. I prepared pictures for the vocabulary words that we were going to build. For example, mu/fa/na=mufana, I ensure that I have a picture to match the word. Ja/ha, cho/ko/le/ti= chokoleti, ba/ji= baji. They clap according to the number of syllables in a word. After reading repeatedly, they form a sentence. Mufana u dya chokoleti, Mufana u ambale baji. The boy eats chocolate; The boy is wearing a jacket”.

Learners who struggled to read could not read difficult vocabulary because they had problems with letter sounding. Letter sounding should be taught continuously as a basic skill from lower grades. Lack of phonemics sounding hinders fluency. TD2 added thus:

“Our learners lack phonological skills, breaking of words into syllables. If learners come across a word that they do not understand, they are unable to break to read it. They become so frustrated, and they keep stammering or keep silent”.

HA1 opined:

“I think our learners are very ignorant cause when they don’t understand the word; they don’t even ask they read just for the fact of reading. I think the teachers in lower grades did not give them the basics of sounding letters correctly.”

Lack of vocabulary frustrates learners, especially when they stammer; they develop low self-esteem and ultimately end up unable to read fluently.

HD1 stated that:

“Learners cannot conceptualise a letter to make meaning of the word if they cannot sound. Teachers themselves cannot sound, so how can they develop fluent readers? Our reading lessons are characterised by drilling and memorisation without understanding. A welcoming reading lesson is characterised by vocabulary, pictures and sight words that can help the child to read fluently”.

Teachers must always teach by sounding and segmenting vocabulary words to the learners. Moreover, teachers must teach learners letter sounding and pronunciation. Blending and segmentation of words are also important to help learners read fluently. TE1 had four years of teaching experience but noted that teachers were not teaching phonic awareness accordingly. He had perceived that the teaching of phonics and vocabulary was neglected by teachers because they were not committed to their work.

4.8 THEME 5. ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS WHO LACK FLUENCY IN THEIR READING

Some learners are lagging behind in reading for fluency in Grade 3 class. The participants came up with strategies which could help learners read fluently.

4.8.1 Monitoring and support

While answering the research question on how teachers support learners who cannot read fluently, HC1, a DH at school C responded in this way:

“I ensure that I do a reading audit once per term. As I do class visit, I identify diverse kinds of learners in our classes, those who read fluently and those who stammer in the reading of Xitsonga (HL). I motivate and support them. As the DH, I discuss with the subject teacher to come out with reading strategies like repeated reading, which will help the struggling learners to read without any difficulty”.

On the other hand, HA1 argues that learners need motivation so that they do better”

“Sometimes I do read aloud, and I allow each learner to read the same text. This helps me identify learners who are lagging behind and to see how I can assist them. I motivate them and then come out with different reading strategies for such a particular learner. I will encourage them to read the same text that has pictures as they will connect pictures and words or sentences.”

Moreover, HC1 pointed out that departmental heads must intervene in classes through monitoring and support. She pointed out that they should know what is happening in classes by doing reading audits.

“It is important to monitor and give support to teachers and learners. The school must support the lower grades with resources. As the departmental head, I must identify learners who are struggling to read and give support. We must also empower newly appointed teachers through school-based workshops. Teachers must support one another as a phase”.

In addition, HE1 in answering the question of what can be done to enable learners to read with fluency, he stated that:

“Departmental heads should do monitoring and support and see what is happening in the classes. Teachers should be supported and monitored to check if they are following ATP and teach according to alleviate reading problems that we are facing as a nation.”

4.8.2 Use of different reading strategies

On how she helped learners who were struggling to read with fluency, HE1 shared:

“I will use phonemic awareness and phonics. We sound the phonic sounds which have been done in the morning. I remain with them after the lessons. I use sound more and more until they can also know it when you ask them. I make some flashcards of words I have taught in the class and paste them on the wall for learners to see. I give them more work on the sound they are learning.”

In answering the question of how teachers could help learners read with fluency, TD1 elaborated on the use of different reading strategies:

“Learners are in Grade 3, yet their level of reading is low. I use different types of reading strategies. I allow learners who are struggling to read to point to the text using their fingers. Some learners during shared reading are not reading. I go around listening to them to see who is reading and who is emulating the noise of others. A learner must know that a sentence is made up of words. He must be able to identify each word in the sentence.”

The participants move from one strategy of teaching from one to another to help learners attain fluency in the reading.

TD1, as she answered the question of how she can support learners who are struggling in reading, pointed out the use of the syllabic method:

“It is true that some learners are having challenges in reading. As teachers, we need to help them. The best way I help the learners in my class is through the use of syllables. As a teacher, I must identify the type of difficulty my learners are facing. We must move from one syllabic to another depending on the learner. Once the learner understands the syllables with two digraphs or more and begins to read a sentence or a paragraph, she/he will no longer struggle to read.”

4.8.3 Awards

The participants came out with ways to help learners read with fluency and expression. One of the ways which was identified by participants was the giving of awards. TE1 gave his views by stating that:

“One of the keys we can use to motivate and support learners who struggle to read in my class is giving tokens of appreciation. I allow learners during the period of read-aloud to read as individuals. I give them storybooks. Sometimes I use the same text, but I also use new reading materials. Those who read with fluency can also read the new storybook without difficulties meanwhile the other group struggles. I always give a token of appreciation to support the struggling learners. I always have new coloured pens or cards as a token of appreciation to motivate them”.

On the other hand, HC1 shared the same sentiment and elaborated on the use of awards to motivate the learners. She emphasised that learners need motivation from the school as well.

“As the DH, during the phase meeting, I always deliberate on the use of awards or certification to motivate our learners. In our school, we give awards once per quarter, we do not award the top learners only but also the best learners in reading and those who are coming out of reading problems. Learners need to be awarded, so we do our best as a school to motivate and encourage them to do like others. The awarding system works excellently in our schools. The reading competition is high in Grade 3 classes. Learners are given certificates once per quarter”.

In addition, TB1 also pointed out how awards help learners come out of dysfunctional readers. In answering the question of how she supports learners with reading problems, she stated that:

“Motivation is very important. We must show love to our learners even those who are struggling. Teach them with love. I award learners in my class with storybooks to read for enjoyment. If I identify that a learner is trying to come out of reading challenges, I motivate and give her/him a new reading book to read at home. The following day, such a learner must come and read in front of other learners. I try to build their confidence.”

The participants emphasised on the importance of supporting learners through the awards system. TA1 further pointed out that certification of learners is one of the best methods of supporting learners.

“We must give certificates to motivate learners. Even the most improved learners in reading should be rewarded to minimise reading problems.”

4.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the biographical information of the participants and the identified themes and categories that emerged from the data. The chapter revealed the methodologies and strategies used by Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) teachers to teach reading fluency. Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) teachers know what to teach and do not follow blindly what is stipulated in the NECT documents. Most of these teachers try to ensure that their learners read with fluency. For instance, they use one method after another, the use of syllables and different resources to help their learners acquire reading fluency. From the findings, one can learn that some teachers strive to ensure that their learners can read with understanding and fluency. Many methodologies and strategies for teaching reading were integrated to ensure that learners read with fluency. The next chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, data collected through interviews and observations were presented. The study aimed to observe and analyse the effective teaching of reading fluency skills in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL). To achieve this aim, the researcher interviewed the departmental heads and Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) teachers. The identified problem of the study was that Grade 3 learners are unable to read Xitsonga (HL) with fluency. This chapter concludes the study by providing a summary of the research findings, recommendations and conclusions.

5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 dealt with the research background, rationale, research questions, preliminary literature review and theoretical framework. Furthermore, it focused on the research design and methodology, as well as issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Chapter 2 provided a detailed literature review on the teaching of fluency skills in Xitsonga (HL) and South Africa's language in education policy. It also explained the theoretical framework that underpinned the study, the advantages of teaching in a home language, the importance of reading fluency, intervention strategies against the lack of fluency in reading, components of reading and the teaching of reading strategies.

Chapter 3 discussed the research methodology and design employed in the study. It also elucidated the data collection strategies such as the use of semi-structured interviews with departmental heads and Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) teachers.

Chapter 4 presented the findings in light of the collected data. Data were interpreted in relation to emergent themes, which were supplemented by verbatim quotations from the teachers concerning their understanding of teaching reading fluency skills to Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) learners.

This chapter summarises the research findings, makes recommendations and draws the conclusion of the study.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The summary of the research findings is based on the themes generated in Chapter 4 and in alignment with the literature review and the theoretical framework that guided this study.

The chapter also answers the research questions of the study. The study was guided by secondary questions, which were:

- *How do teachers implement the CAPS document in their teaching of reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?*
- *How often do Grade 3 teachers use resources in the teaching of reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?*
- Which methodologies and strategies are understood by teachers in teaching that may contribute to the attainment of reading fluency in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?
- *What hinders learners from reading fluently in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?*
- *How do teachers support learners who cannot read fluently in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?*

Table 5.1: The table below situates the findings within the literature review and theoretical framework

Theme	Data from the study	Data from literature	Source in the literature
1. The implementation of CAPS document.	Teachers use the CAPS document to teach reading in Grade 3	Reads independently at a more complex level for enjoyment or information from a variety of available texts, magazines and comics, simple fiction and non-fiction books and books.	DoE, 2011. section 2.3.
2. Stages of utilisation of resources in assisting Grade 3 learners to read Xitsonga (HL) fluently	The wall in our classes must be pasted with charts of poems, short stories, words, and syllabic charts to cater all learners	Foundation Phase classes should be printed with words to improve learners` vocabulary knowledge.	Aldhanhani and Abu-Ayyash (2020) Section 2.8
3. Methodologies and strategies of teaching reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)	Teachers model reading to learners by reading aloud.	A teacher modelling reading is a profound fluency intervention that can be used to enhance fluency.	Steven, Walker & Vaughn, 2016. Section, 2.4.5.1

	<p>Learners read the same passage over and over until they become fluent.</p> <p>Learners were awarded books to read independently.</p> <p>A welcoming reading lesson is characterised by vocabulary, pictures and sight words that can help the child to read fluently.</p> <p>We emphasise the sounding of vowels in each syllable.</p> <p>Learners read the letter sounding it repeatedly.</p> <p>We sound consonants, add vowels and sound them again.</p> <p>The learning of new vocabulary words improved reading fluency.</p> <p>Learners read by sharing the text with someone more knowledgeable, their teacher.</p> <p>Teachers use a guided reading strategy, which can help learners read fluently</p>	<p>Repeated reading is identified as the key method for teaching fluency.</p> <p>Extensive reading promotes fluency and leads to independent reading.</p> <p>Learners must be exposed to a print-rich environment.</p> <p>In the synthetic approach, learners are taught letter sounds.</p> <p>Awareness of phonics at the early grades enhances the ability to understand words and phonics in reading.</p> <p>Learners who read in an African language like Xitsonga must master consonant sounds.</p> <p>Vocabulary knowledge contributes to the development of reading fluency.</p> <p>Shared reading expands learners' knowledge of language like vocabulary.</p> <p>Group work promotes unity and cooperation; learners listen to each other as they learn.</p>	<p>Rasinski. 2016. Section 2.4.5.2</p> <p>Januarty. 2018. Section 2.4.5.3</p> <p>Tayob & Moonsay. 2018. Section 2.4.5.3</p> <p>Torgeson. 2015. Section 2.5.1</p> <p>Maqbooi, Sarwar, zamar, Zaffer & Wei. 2020. Section 2.5.1.1</p> <p>Wilsenach. 2019. Section 2.5.2</p> <p>Oliver & Young. 2016. Section 2.5.3</p>
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			<p>Tayob & Moonsay. 2018. Section 2.7.1</p> <p>Major. 2018. Section, 2.7.2</p>
<p>4. Challenges to fluent reading.</p>	<p>Learners have emotional factors and learning challenges.</p> <p>Some learners have no basic letter sounding in lower grades.</p> <p>They lack vocabulary appropriate to their grade level.</p>	<p>Learners with learning disabilities struggle to develop fluency.</p> <p>Lack of decoding skills derails the acquisition of fluency.</p> <p>Phonological awareness and vocabulary size.</p>	<p>Stevens, Walker & Vaughan. 2016. Section 2.6</p> <p>Khan, 2018. Section 2.6.</p> <p>Antipkina, Kuznetsova & Kardanova. 2017. Section 2.6</p>
<p>5. Aspects to be considered in supporting learners who lack fluency in their reading.</p>	<p>Departmental heads should do monitoring and support.</p> <p>Motivation is very important.</p> <p>I use different types of reading strategies.</p>	<p>Motivation plays an important role in influencing learners to read.</p> <p>Dialogue reading technique</p>	<p>Mehigan (2020)</p> <p>Squires, Gillam and Reutzel (2013) Section 2.8</p>

5.4 DISCUSSION

The section discusses the relevant literature on reading fluency skills as presented in Chapter 2, supplemented by the data collected in this study. Differences and agreements between the literature and data surfaced and assisted in answering the research questions. The research focused only on five themes, which made a significant contribution to the study. The themes are the implementation of the CAPS, the methodologies of teaching Xitsonga Grade 3 (HL), stages of utilisation of resources in assisting Grade 3 learners to read Xitsonga (HL) fluently, the challenges to fluent reading and aspects to be considered in supporting learners who lack fluency in their reading. Syllabication was the method mostly used by teachers to teach Xitsonga (HL) reading fluency to help learners who could not read with fluency.

Reading is fundamental because it provides us with information about what is happening around us and globally. In the study, the researcher focused on teaching reading fluency skills. In **Table 5.1**, relevant literature cited in Chapter 2 has been linked to the themes.

5.4.1 Discussion of the findings in view of the Literature Review and the Theoretical Framework

5.4.1.1 *THEME 1: The implementation of CAPS*

In **Table 5.1**, the findings were summarised. In the first column, there are themes presented in comparison with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Data from the study, data from the literature and the source are listed in columns two, three and four. Themes one, two and three, which are listed in 5.3.1, depict the teaching of reading fluency skills and the participants' understanding of teaching reading fluency skills in Xitsonga (HL). In **Table 5.1**, theme one, the researcher considered perspectives on policy implementation proffered by Makumbila and Rowland (2016). The learners in Foundation Phase grades are taught in their home languages as stipulated in the Constitution and CAPS document. The CAPS document allows learners to learn in their home languages (see Section 2.3). In all the schools that participated in the study, learners used Xitsonga as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) because it was their home language.

The findings show that the teachers complied with the CAPS document and NECT document in their teaching of reading. Many teachers followed the CAPS document to teach reading and valued the strategies and teaching methodologies stipulated by the DBE. According to CAPS, one of the strategies for teaching reading is phonics (see Section 4.5.1.1). The DBE supplied schools with NECT lesson plans, which had strategies for teaching reading. The scripted lesson plans helped the teachers to prepare and teach accordingly across the curriculum. The NECT lesson plans guided them on the strategy to use as they followed the routine provided. The weekly routine helped the teachers to teach accordingly. The routine acted as a scaffold to help learners read with fluency. The learners were guided and assisted using the CAPS document and therefore, the teachers did not teach without guidance (see Section 4.1.1.1). The CAPS document enabled the learners' progression from the known to the unknown content. Teachers taught the learners by linking the new learning content with the previous knowledge.

The learners should be equipped with knowledge, irrespective of their background, race or ethnicity (DoE, 2011). It was found that teachers understood that the learners had different learning abilities (see Section 4.1.1.1). They adhered to the teaching time allocated and used various strategies to ensure that the learners could read with fluency (see Sections 4.1.1.2 and 4.1.1.3). The teaching strategies found in CAPS and NECT documents assisted the learners in reaching their ZPD (see Section 2.7).

The Covid-19 pandemic severely affected learning and teaching in the schools. As a result, the DBE implemented the use of ATP to cover the time lost during the lockdown. The participants implemented ATP in their teaching of reading, even though the methodologies and strategies of teaching reading were not affected (see Section 4.1.1.1). Reading fluency occurred through adherence to the CAPS document and accurate implementation of reading strategies.

5.4.1.2 THEME 2: Stages of utilisation of resources in assisting Grade 3 learners to read Xitsonga (HL)

In **Table 5.1**, Theme Two, the researcher that Foundation Phase classes should be printed with words to improve learners' vocabulary knowledge proffered by Aldhanhani and Abu-Ayyash (2020). The literature revealed that the are stages of using resources in Grade 3

class. The resources can be utilised to introduce new learning or new content. The learners need to fully comprehend the new content in their classes. Therefore, it is impossible to master it without the use of different resources in the class. The teacher needs to use resources because it makes learning interesting. When learners become interested in what is happening in the class, learning becomes meaningful. Teachers use different resources in class to make the learners listen attentively to the learning content which is being delivered.

Moreover, Limpopo DoE provides learners in Grade 3 with workbooks. The workbooks are some of the resources provided by the department and they must be used to enhance reading fluency skills in Xitsonga (HL) in Grade 3 classes. The workbooks can help learners read fluently because they have colourful pictures and are written in different fonts to enhance reading. Squires, Gillam and Reutzel (2013) argue that teachers can scaffold with visual support to help learners. Teaching and learning resources can be used to assist learners during the process of teaching and learning of Xitsonga (HL) (see Section 2.5.3).

Most importantly, the letters of the alphabet, sounds, syllabic words, sentences, phonics, stories and poems can be pasted on the walls to help learners elucidate reading fluency (see Section 2.8). Therefore, resources function as scaffolds (as envisaged by Vygotsky, which makes learning interesting and meaningful. Extensive reading encourages learners to read extensive materials that interest them, develop cognitive skills and improve reading comprehension (Zahri, Anwar & Maruf, 2022) (see Section 2.4.5.3.). The findings revealed that learners are not given enough materials to help them in reading (see Section 4.5.4). Most teachers relied on the DBE workbook to teach reading. Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) workbooks are rich in stories and vocabulary and clear and colourful illustrations which make reading more meaningful.

5.4.1.3 THEME 3: Methodologies of teaching Xitsonga (HL) Grade 3 learners

The literature review revealed that the three methodologies used to teach reading fluency skills were repeated reading, modelling and extensive reading. On the other hand, the CAPS document states that the strategies that can help teachers in class to teach reading are shared reading, guided reading and phonics. According to the findings, teachers used syllabication to teach reading fluency in Xitsonga (HL). Syllabication is thus integrated into all the methodologies and strategies by the participants to teach reading in Grade 3.

It promotes reading fluency when learners segment and blend syllables. There is no reading fluency without syllabication.

In Chapter 2, (see Sections 2.4.5.1, 2.4.5.2 and 2.4.5.3), the researcher mentioned that modelling, repeated and extensive reading enhance reading fluency, and further quoted Steven, Walker and Vaughn (2016), who opined that modelling of reading intervention helps to promote fluency. Learners who have reading difficulties can be helped when teachers model reading to them. It is a scaffolding process where they are assisted by someone more knowledgeable in the subject matter. In Section 4.1.2.2.1, the researcher affirmed that the teachers were modelling reading to the learners and throughout the observations, they modelled reading for the learners while teaching reading in the home language. In addition, the literature acknowledged modelling of reading as an effective methodology for attaining fluency. When the teacher read aloud, the learners were engaged in conversations, information and explanations about the book read (Ceyhan *et al.*, 2021).

A teacher is a model to learners, thus, when they read a book aloud, paying attention to their reading rate, intonation and accurate pronunciation of words, learners become interested in reading. When the teacher models reading to learners, their curiosity about the book is aroused. Reading aloud to learners fosters vocabulary and learners enjoy reading. The findings revealed that many teachers often model reading during shared reading (see Section 4.5.1). Teachers should always read a book to learners by pronouncing the words correctly and reading fluently with an appropriate intonation and reading rate (Ceyhan *et al.*, 2021). In the process, a teacher should scaffold and help the learner to reach their potential in reading fluently (Kusmaryono *et al.*, 2021). As teachers model reading, they put more emphasis on letter sounding and pronunciation so that learners can sound words effectively and efficiently (see Section 4.5.1).

In **Table 5.1** and Section 2.4.5.2, the researcher cited Rasinski (2016), who proffers that repeated reading is one of the key methods that enhance reading fluency. There was evidence of repeated reading of the same text in class among the teachers interviewed (see Section 4.1.2.2.2). Reading fluency improves as learners listen to the teacher reading repeatedly (Ceyhan & Yildiz, 2020). According to NECT, in the Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) lesson plan, phonics is taught four times a week, therefore, the same phonics should be repeated twice a week (see Section 4.4.5). Reading cannot be done once. Repeated reading of syllables, vocabulary words, phonics and comprehension helps learners to overcome reading

challenges. In their teaching of phonics, teachers segmented words into syllables for learners to read fluently. They read syllables of the phonics words repeatedly and sounded them. They were aware that content must be repeated not only twice, but until learners gain fluency (see Section 4.2.2).

Hudson, Koh, Moore and Binks-Cantrell (2020) agree with the above findings by emphasising that repeated reading with multiple features like choral reading, verbal cueing, and error correction is essential in determining the effectiveness of oral reading fluency among learners with reading difficulties. Xin and Yunus (2020) state that repeated reading helps learners reread meaningful passages until the oral production of the text is fluent and flowing. Repeated reading creates a meaningful interaction between the text and the reader, and this also happens when learners are doing shared reading. Okai, Gyinnach, Vanderpuye and Bello (2021) state that repeated reading helps learners improve reading fluency in the practice text and in text that they have never read. It boosts the learners' confidence and prepares them to encounter more challenging passages (see Section 2.4.5.2).

There is also extensive reading as a method of teaching reading fluency skills. In extensive reading, teachers are given a variety of books and materials to read. According to Andres (2020), extensive reading allows teachers to increase learners' interest in reading by providing them with different kinds of texts related to their lives. In every class, some learners are fluent while others struggle with the same. According to the literature, extensive reading helps learners to become fluent readers.

The DBE supplies schools with storybooks to enhance reading. Learners who complete tasks faster must be enriched with storybooks to read for leisure and enjoyment. In addition, teachers can download stories in the home language from the internet to help learners with reading. This is so because, in the findings of this study, there was little evidence of extensive reading in the teaching of reading fluency skills in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL).

According to Vygotsky's ZPD, learners can solve difficult problems while working with adults that they cannot solve independently (Zaretsky, 2021). The ZPD is reached through scaffolding where a teacher provides support to a learner to solve problems (Margolis, 2020). According to Kusmaryono, Jupriyanto and Kusumaningsih (2021), there are elements of ZPD that are important: assistance, cooperation, the ability to imitate, targets and getting out of one's comfort zone. Learners can be assisted and can read independently when they share

reading with the teacher. Through observation and interviews, I witnessed learners being assisted through different reading strategies and methods to promote fluency.

In **Table 5.1**, the researcher cited Oliver and Young (2016) who indicated that vocabulary knowledge enhances fluency. According to Khamesipour (2015), vocabulary is the knowledge of words and what they mean. Vocabulary instruction abets learners' knowledge of words and helps them to understand what they are reading. Reading provides opportunities for new vocabulary words to be learnt (Ricketts, Lervåg, Dawson, Taylor and Hulme, 2020). In this study, Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) learners learnt to increase their vocabulary to access new ideas, express concepts and communicate. When the learners answered the teacher's question, they were also extending their vocabulary and communication skills. Sufficient vocabulary knowledge helps a learner to successfully perform the four literacy skills: reading and writing, listening and speaking, as stated in Sections 4.1.1 and 4.2.1, respectively. On the other hand, insufficient vocabulary means that there are many words that a learner does not know and struggles to read with understanding. The NECT lesson plan documents were delivered with vocabulary words and large posters for listening, speaking and chatting with letters of the alphabet in cursive writing and print.

During the observation, many Grade 3 classes were conducive to learning because of their print-rich environment. All the schools observed had syllable charts to help learners with syllables. The walls had pictures, words and syllable charts which the teachers had written to improve fluent reading among the learners (see Section 4 and Figures 1, 2 and 3). Vocabulary learning is a continuous process, and as such, learners must be exposed to vocabulary in their classes (Ariffin, 2021). Learners were exposed to a high volume of vocabulary because of the word walls. The word walls help learners read comprehension passages as they read independently in their reading corners. Through the word walls, learners can read story books aloud and confidently with their peers. Vocabulary size matters. For instance, learners who were able to read fluently in the schools observed had teachers who used a variety of resources in their teaching. The learners could read confidently and fluently the long passages that they were given to read to the class.

The findings revealed that shared reading was used by all the teachers interviewed (Section 4.2.3.). In **Table 5.1**, the researcher quoted Tayob and Moonsay (2018) who appreciate how shared reading helps learners to read with fluency. Shared reading helped learners to understand oral language and print as they read the text repeatedly. There was a first read,

where they did a picture walk and their teacher modelled reading for them. Vocabulary words were explained and read by learners. As the teachers explained the new words, they were assisting and guiding the learners. Hence, Vygotsky stated that there should be a relationship between a mentor and mentee. In the second read, the teacher read together with the learners. The teachers used shared reading to help learners read with fluency (see Section 2.2.7.1). The learners were able to reach their ZPD as they were assisted through shared reading by their peers and teachers. This is in line with the idea that reading together is a scaffold to take the child from the unknown to the known content.

In **Table 5.1**, the researcher referred to Antipkina, Kuznetsova and Kardanova (2017), who commented on the role of phonological awareness and vocabulary size in reading fluency. Learners in Grade 3 were taught phonics according to the weekly routine as stipulated by the CAPS and NECTS documents. It was observed by the researcher that the learners were taught five phonics words or more. Learners also came with their own words according to the sound of the week. This way, they expanded their knowledge of vocabulary (see Section 4.2.5). According to the findings, phonics and phonological awareness represent another strategy which helps learners to read with fluency (see Section 4.2.5). Soto, Olszewski and Goldstein (2019) assert that phonological awareness is foundational to reading fluency. Learners' early reading skills begin with phonological awareness and manipulation of spoken words, syllables and phoneme levels. Phonological awareness is defined as the ability to identify and manipulate the sounds of a language. According to the CAPS document, phonics was used three times a week in Grade 3 (HL). The Department of Education supplied the schools with phonics vocabulary words. During the observation in my study, learners were taught phonics and there was evidence of phonics words on the walls (see Figures 3, 4 and 4.5).

In **Table 5.1**, the researcher cited Wilsenach (2019) who argues that learners who learn in African languages like Xitsonga must master consonants. The syllabic chart starts with the consonants sounding and vowels. During the interview in my study, the participants provided information on how they taught reading by using the syllabic chart. Consonant sounds and vowels were taught separately and then blended to form new sounds (see Figure 4.4.). As part of the introduction, learners sounded syllabic charts in reading lessons to help the learners who were lagging behind to attain fluency.

As indicated in **Table 5.1**, Torgersen (2015) says that Foundation Phase lessons should be characterised by a variety of resources to help learners read fluently. The use of syllabication was more evident in the teaching of phonics (see Figure 4.2.) Teachers used syllabication when teaching phonics as they emphasised on sounding with the learners. They used syllables to form new words and segmented the words accordingly. The learners read the words repeatedly. Then, they used phonics vocabulary words to construct sentences to ensure that they had understood and could read with understanding. After teaching, the phonics words were pasted on the wall for learners to read (see Section 2.5.1).

Guided reading was also used by teachers in their teaching of reading. Guided reading is an approach designed to promote independent reading (see Section 4.2.6). Guided reading helps learners to read. It has roots in social constructivism (Young, 2019). In **Table 5.1**, the researcher acknowledged Major (2018) who states that guided reading helps learners to listen to each other as they read aloud. Hence, the learners read aloud for fun, and the teachers guided them to pronounce words correctly (see Section 4.2.2.6). Learners can learn by interacting with the teacher and their peers.

5.4.1.4 THEME 4: Challenges to fluent reading

The challenges experienced in this study with regards to the teaching of reading fluency skills in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) included a lack of reading practice, learning styles and poorly developed vocabulary and phonological skills. Hudson et al. (2020) state that fluency instruction is often absent from the school reading curriculum because classroom teachers are rarely provided with any training on instructional strategies to promote oral reading fluency. The teachers claimed that they were unsupported to develop reading fluency skills among the learners.

In **Table 5.1**, the researcher cited Stevens, Walker and Vaughan (2016) who state that learners with learning disabilities struggle to develop fluency. Different factors were raised by teachers during the interview, which included a lack of reading practice, learning barriers, family background and learning styles, and a socio-economic background is one of the factors that play an important role in the development of fluency in reading (see Section 2.4.5.3). Learners are unique and learn differently, that is why teachers need to implement different learning styles and strategies to accommodate all learners. The participants used

syllabication as a skill to help learners overcome learning barriers to reach fluency. The syllabication skill is a scaffold used by teachers to assist and guide learners in reaching their ZPD, ultimately reading independently.

In Chapter 4, the challenges faced by teachers were discussed in Section 4.1.3. A poor family background could be a learning barrier and thus a hindrance to reading. However, some teachers were not committed to the teaching of reading, hence, some learners lacked fluency. When a teacher is not committed to teaching reading skills, learners progress from one grade to the other without a good foundation. It becomes difficult for such learners to read congruent to their grade level. According to Darmayanti, Usmyatun, Setia, Sekaryanti and Safitiri (2023), when learners encounter reading problems, they can use scaffolding to help solve the problems. The findings revealed that teachers helped learners to read with fluency by doing syllabication while teaching phonics (see Section 4.1.3). The participants emphasised the use of syllabication to help learners who were battling to read. In this study, the findings revealed that the teachers implemented different methodologies of teaching reading to ensure that learners were able to read congruent to their grade level.

As cited in **Table 5.1**, Khan (2018) states that a lack of decoding skills derails the acquisition of fluency. Some learners had no basic skills of letter sounding from Grade One (see Section 4.3.2). Some learners were in Grade 3 but were still reading at the lower grade level. Such learners need to be guided and assisted to reach their level. Learning is a progression from one grade to another (DoE,2011). The use of syllables starts in Grade 1 and learners continue accordingly from the use of single graphs to multiple graphs. The learners start school in Grade R, where they are introduced to formal education. There are basic sounding skills that must be learnt as they progress from grade to grade. The teaching of reading fluency skills should start in Grade 1. Learners should be exposed to the foundation of sounding letters so that they become fluent according to their grade level.

5.4.1.5 THEME 5: Aspects to be considered in supporting learners who lack fluency in their reading

In Table 5.1, the researcher cited Mehigan (2020) who concurs that motivation plays an important role in influencing learners to read. Learners who lack reading fluency should be provided with support to help them alleviate the reading challenges that they are facing.

Newman (2000) argues that the learner needs assistance to work independently, which must be provided in the form of “scaffolding,” where an adult carefully monitors how the child is doing and what support the child needs to be taken to the next level (see Section 1.4.). Dialogue reading is one of the ways to scaffold learning for the learner. The interaction between an adult and the learner makes learning bear fruits as it promotes language development and scaffolding (see Section 2.4). Learners can be assisted by working with others. The findings revealed that learners need to be motivated in the class. It is important to create a learning situation in class which positively develops learners’ self-confidence (Klapp, 2016). Teachers play a major role in the learners’ academic performance. The use of different types of teaching strategies is another factor which was revealed to support learners who lack fluency (see Section 2.7). Different teaching methodologies and strategies have been discussed as major scaffolding which can help escalate learners from one level of reading to another.

5.5 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEIR ANSWERS

The secondary research questions were addressed next.

5.5.1 What factors contribute to the effective teaching of reading fluency?

The study identified intrinsic factors that contribute to the effective teaching of fluency. The participants mentioned the use of the CAPS document, the commitment of a teacher to teach reading effectively and efficiently, reading practice, a print-rich environment and a good foundation of letter sounds. The participants agreed that they implemented the CAPS document as recommended by the DBE to teach reading. They also agreed that a teacher needs to use CAPS accordingly by following the methodologies and the strategies that are in the CAPS document during reading. They concurred that the CAPS and NECT lesson plans work together because both have strategies recommended to teach reading. Sometimes, the learners face difficulties in reading because of how they are taught in class. The teacher needs to be fully committed to helping learners to attain a higher level of fluency and read with comprehension. The use of resources in class was another factor that contributed to the effective teaching of reading fluency. Learners need a good foundation from lower grades to sound letters effectively. They also need enough time to practise reading at home and school.

5.5.2 What can be recommended to improve the teaching of reading fluency in Xitsonga (HL)?

The use of syllabication is recommended for use by Grade 3 teachers to improve their teaching of reading fluency skills. Syllabication can be integrated into all the strategies of teaching. Moreover, it can be used as the foundation from Grade 1. As an example, when TA1 taught shared reading, learners picked out difficult words and segmented them into syllables. This was done to help the learners who had reading difficulties. Syllabication also works with the methodologies of teaching reading. Learners with their teacher read the vocabulary words repeatedly. During the researcher's observation, it was noted that the participants used available resources all the time. A print-rich environment can improve reading fluency in Grade 3. The resources can be provided by the DBE, or the teacher can make cards to help learners in their class to read with fluency. The classes had syllabic charts pasted on the wall. The learners must have their own small syllabic charts to help them when they are at home. The class must have a word wall with stories, phonic words, pictures, syllables and letters of the alphabet pasted neatly on the wall. The syllabic chart must accommodate all learners according to their abilities, single graphs, digraphs and multiple graphs. There must be a reading corner with storybooks, and teachers should be allowed to go to the reading corner to read extensively while the teacher is busy with other learners.

5.5.3 What reading methodologies and strategies are needed to teach fluency in reading in Xitsonga (HL)?

It was found that the participants identified different methodologies of teaching reading fluency. One of the methodologies used by the teachers was repeated reading. When they were taught, they read the syllables or vocabulary words repeatedly. Even when they did shared reading, they read repeatedly until the learners attained fluency. The learners read after the teacher, repeating what the teacher was saying. In the interview, TC1 stated that she read the same text with the learners several times. There was also a modelled reading methodology. Modelled reading was used by all the participants. They all agreed that modelling reading helped learners to attain fluency. The teacher reads aloud to learners using correct intonation, gestures and correct pronunciation. Learners like to emulate their teachers. As teachers model reading, learners will also read like them.

The teachers also identified extensive reading as a methodology they used to teach reading fluency. Learners were given a variety of books to read. During observation, TE1 awarded a learner who read fluently with a new storybook to read for pleasure. TE2 commented that there should be more books in Xitsonga, newspapers and articles so that learners could read extensively and expand their knowledge. Therefore, repeated, modelled and extensive reading methodologies can be used to improve reading.

The researcher identified strategies that were commonly used by the participants to improve reading fluency. The strategies are found in the CAPS and NECT documents, respectively. They were shared reading, phonics and guided reading. These strategies were used by the participants to teach reading fluency. There was a routine to be followed while teaching the strategies. Shared reading was done using DBE workbooks, a big book or any text that could be enlarged for all the learners to see. In shared reading, learners read the same text together with their teacher. The teachers had a good understanding of and were very familiar with methodologies and strategies to teach reading fluency. The teachers understood repeated, modelled and extensive reading methodologies. During the interview, TA1 mentioned that she created a conducive environment while modelling reading. All the methodologies identified were used successfully to help learners attain fluency. For example, shared reading was one of the strategies that was used by all the participants. During observation, the teachers read together with the learners, and they read repeatedly. During the reading, they also identified phonics words, which means that sometimes, the strategies and methods can be used congruently. The teachers said that they read phonics repeatedly with learners and pasted them on the walls for learners to read. The use of phonics as a strategy of teaching reading fluency was evident in their classes as they were pasted on the wall. Moreover, the learners must be guided to read difficult texts, as TA1 suggested using guided reading to help the learners attain fluency.

5.5.4 What are the teachers' perspectives on teaching reading fluency?

The teachers felt it necessary to teach reading fluency skills because there were learners with different learning abilities in their classes. All the learners needed assistance to gain fluency. TE1 stated that her grade class had no problem with reading, however, sometimes some learners were admitted to Grade 3 from other schools that had reading difficulties. Thus, as a teacher, she felt it necessary to assist such learners so that they progressed

together with other learners in her class. Most of the teachers strove for fluency in their classes by using the CAPS document and all the strategies recommended to teach reading. The participants used syllabication as a skill to teach reading and it worked because most learners were able to read fluently congruent to their grade level. The participants agreed that learners who could not read fluently needed support. They assisted them by using the syllabic chart to ensure that they had the foundation of reading. The teachers used syllabic charts with the learners who were lagging behind to help them attain fluency. During the research, the participants from all the schools had syllabic charts on their walls. The participants ensured that their classes were print-rich to help the learners read without difficulties.

5.5.5 Why is the CAPS document necessary in the teaching of reading?

The new curriculum that needed to be implemented in teaching and learning in South Africa was the CAPS document. The document had all the strategies that are recommended for teaching reading. The time allocation and routines were clearly stated in the CAPS document. The participants in the study used the CAPS document and NECT lesson plan to teach reading.

5.6 IMPLICATIONS

The following implications of the study on reading fluency skills in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL) emanated from the findings. In essence, the lack of teaching reading fluency may lead to the following implications, if not attended to timeously in the Foundation Phase classroom:

- Lack of fluent reading may affect the comprehension of the text being read. Before comprehension, learners must first be in a position to decode the words using the knowledge of sounds. If learners do not know the sounds of letters, they may not be able to pronounce words, which will have a negative consequence on their comprehension abilities. In the Foundation Phase the purpose of developing literacy is to teach reading, which later may be used to read for learning. If reading fluency is not taught, it may affect the learner's academic journey with negative consequences.

- Reading books is important so that learners may practise the skill of reading on their own. The lack of a variety of books may negatively influence learners' ability to read. Fluent reading is a skill that is acquired through practice; therefore, learners must be afforded the opportunity to read as often as possible, including for leisure.
- The use of the CAPS document when teaching is very important. With the CAPS document, teachers will know the guidelines to follow. It will help them to know the strategies of teaching reading and how to use them daily.
- A print-rich environment is needed in the Foundation Phase. Learners learn best with various resources in class. Teachers need to create a conducive learning environment for the Foundation Phase learners, where they can be engaged in learning using various resources in class, which can help them reach their goals.
- Teachers' knowledge of teaching reading must be enhanced. Teachers need to be monitored and supported to teach reading as failure to do that will result in learners who cannot read, and this will affect their academic progress.

5.7 DELIMITATIONS

The study was limited to the teaching of reading fluency in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL). It included only Grade 3 teachers and Foundation Phase DH working in Khomanani Cluster, Hlanganani Central Circuit of Vhembe West District in Limpopo Province. Other stakeholders like school governing bodies and unions were not included in the study.

5.8 LIMITATIONS

The study used the qualitative research approach and the phenomenological research design. The study used semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis to collect data. A small sample of DHs and Grade 3 teachers was used and therefore, the findings of this study do not represent all Grade 3 Xitsonga teachers and DHs in the province. No other stakeholders were involved in the study besides Grade 3 Xitsonga teachers and DHs of schools in Hlanganani Central Circuit. The findings were based on interviews and observations with limited data to cross-check findings apart from comparing what different DHs and teachers had elaborated.

5.9 FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of the study generated the following research ideas for further exploration:

- A study on the use of resources in the Foundation Phase classes, such as teaching Xitsonga by employing indigenous knowledge systems is needed.
- A study of teachers' experiences of teaching reading using a narrative approach could elucidate the challenges faced by teachers in primary schools.
- A study of parental involvement in the Foundation Phase classes could shed light on the role of parents in supporting the reading skills of their children.

5.10 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The study focused on a small number of teachers who teach reading fluency skills in Grade 3. The findings cannot be generalised beyond the context of the study. Nevertheless, the study exhibits a good level of understanding in the teaching of reading fluency skills in the Foundation Phase. It highlights the teaching of reading fluency skills and challenges with the attainment of reading fluency skills. Furthermore, the study concludes by highlighting the implications of not teaching reading fluency. These implications are that the lack of reading fluency might yield an undesirable influence on the schooling trajectory of learners. Learners who cannot read with fluency might encounter challenges such as an inability to understand the text being read and decoding the meaning of written texts. It is therefore important to ensure that learners can read with fluency in the Foundation phase.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICS CLEARANCE

CONFIDENTIAL



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

TO: DR MC MAKOLA

FROM: DR T MABILA

CHAIRPERSON: LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (LPREC)

ONLINE REVIEW DATE: 04th - 12th APRIL 2022

SUBJECT: TEACHING OF READING FLUENCY SKILLS IN GRADE THREE XITSONGA HOME LANGUAGE

RESEARCHER: KUBAYI TM

Dear Colleague

The above researcher's research proposal served at the Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC). The ethics committee is satisfied with the ethical soundness of the proposed study.

Decision: The revised research proposal is granted approval and ethics clearance.

Regards

Chairperson: Dr T Mabila

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'T Mabila'.

Secretariat: Ms J Mokobi

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J Mokobi'.

Date: 28/04/2022

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE _Tintswalo Kubayi.pdf"

"C:\Users\kubay\OneDrive\Desktop\Editorial



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2021/11/10

Ref: **2021/11/10/33601313/20/AM**

Name: Ms TM KUBAYI

Student No.:33601313

Dear Ms TM KUBAYI

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2021/11/10 to 2024/11/10

Researcher(s): Name: Ms TM KUBAYI
E-mail address: 33601313@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 073 689 9321

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof N .C. PHATUDI
E-mail address: phatun1@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 429 4582

Name: Dr M. NGEMA
E-mail address: Engema@unisa.ca.za
Telephone: 012 429 4472

Title of research:

TEACHING OF READING FLUENCY SKILLS IN GRADE THREE XITSONGA HOME LANGUAGE.

Qualification: MEd Curriculum Studies

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2021/11/10 to 2024/11/10.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2021/11/10 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.



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APPENDIX C: LETTER TO LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P. O. Box 1076

KHOMANANI

0933

27 January 2022

Head of Department Education
Limpopo Department of Education
Private Bag X9489
POLOKWANE
0700

Dear Sir/ Madam

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE, HLANGANANI CENTRAL CIRCUIT.

I wish to apply for permission to conduct research in the above-mentioned circuit. I am a master's student at the University of South Africa specialising in Curriculum Studies. The research topic is: **Teaching of reading fluency skills in to Grade 3 learners Xitsonga home language**. The researcher further requests your permission to conduct interviews with 10 participants (SMT/ Departmental Heads for the Foundation Phase and five Grade 3 teachers) and do observation from primary schools from Hlanganani Central circuit for data collection. The following primary schools are targeted. Ntshunxi, Caledon, Joe Mabendlhe, Khapakhapa and Majosi.

- The aim of this study: Investigate the factors that will improve to the teaching of reading fluency skills in Xitsonga grade three home language.

The knowledge and information obtained from this study will be relevant and valuable to teachers aspiring to be able to know the factors that will contribute to reading fluency in Xitsonga home language. It will not be inspirational for Grade Three teachers only, but it will be very imperative to the Foundation Phase as a whole and the school at large.

Their participation will be in the form of interviews and class observation for 45 minutes and the interviews will be tape recorded. Semi-structured questions will be used to collect data

about the experiences of teachers and DHs in terms of reading fluency in the foundation phase, using participants from Hlanganani Central Circuit. The dates and times of the interviews will be mutually negotiated. Participation in this study is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity regarding information shared are guaranteed. Interviews will be done after teaching time to avoid disruption during contact time.

I hope for your favourable consideration on this matter.

Yours Faithfully

Ms Kubayi T.M.

Contact No: 073 689 9321 / 076 8673 980

E-Mail: kubayit799@gmail.com

APPENDIX D: CONSENT TO PARENTS OF GRADE 3 LEARNERS

P.O. BOX 1076
KHOMANANI
0933

.....

The parents of

.....

Dear Sir/ Madam

SUBJECT: CONSENT TO OBSERVE GRADE 3 LEARNERS IN CLASS

This letter is a request for permission to observe your learners at their schools during the period of Xitsonga HI reading. This research forms part of my Master Degree in the Department of Curriculum Studies at the University of South Africa. The title is: **Teaching of reading fluency skills to Grade Three Learners Xitsonga home language.**

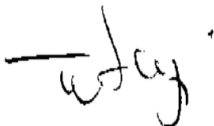
- The aim of the study is: Investigate the factors that will improve the teaching of reading fluency skills in Xitsonga grade three home language.

The knowledge and information attained from this study will be relevant and available to Foundation phase teachers. The participation will be in the form of interviews and class observation for a duration of 45 minutes and information will be recorded.

Hoping for your utmost cooperation

Yours sincerely

Ms T.M Kubayi



APPENDIX E: LETTER FOR PERMISSION FROM PARTICPANTS

Yourself:

School :

Dear Sir/ Madam

SUBJECT: REQUEST AND CONSENT TO INTERVIEW

This letter is a request for permission to conduct research. This research forms part of my Master Degree in the Department of Curriculum Studies at the University of South Africa. The researcher will request information from you through an interview. The title is: **The teaching of reading fluency skills to Grade Three learners Xitsonga home language.**

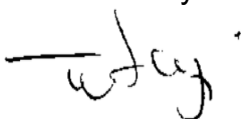
- The aim of the study is: Investigate the factors that will improve the teaching of reading fluency skills in Xitsonga grade three home language.

The knowledge and information attained from this study will be relevant and available to Foundation phase teachers. The interviews will take for 30 minutes and information will be recorded.

Hoping for your utmost cooperation

Yours sincerely

Ms T.M Kubayi



Signature

APPENDIX F: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

This checklist is intended to help both those who are being observed and those who are observing. The focus is to observe factors which have impacts on reading fluency skills.

1. Physical features of the classroom	Yes(√)	No(x)
Classroom		
Hall		
Lighting available		
Position of seats conducive to learning		
Doors(e.g front or back)		
Lighting available		
Ventilation (stuff, cold, hot)		
2. Resources		
Reading corner		
Availability of vocabulary words		
Phonic words		
Big books		
Small books		
Newspapers		
3. Traffic flow		
Where learners sit, rows or groups		
Number of learners (small or overcrowded)		
Reading ability grouping		

Late coming by learners		
Disruptions during lessons		
Reading materials available to all learners		
Material distributed on time		
4. During reading.		
Is there an introduction, prior knowledge		
Reading strategies (e.g guided, shared reading, read aloud)		
Does the teacher model reading?		
Interactions during the lesson		
Is the lesson easy to follow?		
Eye contact with learners?		
Is the teacher's voice audible?		
5. Components of reading fluency		
Does a learner read accurately?		
Does a learner read with prosody (expression)?		
Does a learner read with appropriate rate?		
6. Conclusion		
Feedback given to learners.		

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE A. DEPARTMENTAL HEAD

1. How do teachers implement CAPS document in their teaching of reading?

Question: Explain how teachers in your department implement CAPS documents in their teaching of reading.

Question: How do teachers allocate time for teaching reading?

Question: How do teachers teach shared reading?

Question: How fluent are your grade 3 learners in your home language?

Question: How do you find out if they are fluent or not fluent in their home language?

2. How often do grade three teachers use resources in the teaching of reading?

Question: Explain how teachers utilise resources in assisting learners to read fluently

Question: Explain how you assist teachers with resources that increase fluent reading by learners.

RESEARCH QUESTION: Which methodologies and strategies are understood by teachers in teaching that may contribute towards the attainment of reading fluency in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?

Question: What are teachers' understanding of familiarity with strategies and methodologies of teaching fluent reading?

Question: Explain how teachers implement methodologies that assist learners to read fluently.

Question: Explain how teachers implement strategies to assist learners to read fluently.

Question: How familiar are your teachers with strategies that assist learners to read fluently?

Question: How familiar are your teachers with methods to read fluently?

4. What hinders learners from reading fluently?

Question: Explain what you think contributes to hindering learners from being able to read fluently.

5. How do teachers support learners who cannot read fluently?

Question: Explain what you think must be done to enable learners to read with fluency.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE B GRADE THREE TEACHERS

1. Research question: How do you implement CAPS document in your teaching of reading?

Question: Explain how you implement CAPS document in your teaching of reading.

Question: How do you allocate time for teaching reading?

Question: How do you teach shared reading?

Question: How fluent are your Grade 3 learners in your home language?

Question: What are you doing to help learners who are lagging behind?

2. Research question: How often do Grade 3 teachers use resources in the teaching of reading?

Question: Explain how you utilise resources in assisting learners to read fluently.

Question: What kind of resources can you utilise to increase fluent reading by learners?

3. Research question: Which methodologies and strategies are understood by teachers in teaching that may contribute towards the attainment of reading fluency in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?

Question: What methodologies of reading can contribute towards the attainment of fluency?

Question: What strategies of reading can contribute towards the attainment of fluency?

Question: Explain how you implement methodologies that assist learners to read fluently.

Question: Explain how you implement strategies to assist learners to read fluently.

Question: Explain what you think contributes to hindering learners from being able to read fluently.

4. What hinders learners from reading fluently in Grade Xitsonga (HL)?

Question: Explain what you think contributes to hindering learners from being able to read fluently.

5. How do teachers support learners who cannot read fluently in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?

Question: Explain what you think must be done to enable learners to read with fluency.

Question: What are you doing to support learners who cannot read fluently?

APPENDIX H: PLAN OF RESEARCH QUESTION

Research question	Data collection tool	Participants	Benefits of the tool
1. How do teachers implement the CAPS document in their teaching of reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?	Interview, observation, document analysis.	DHs and Grade 3 teachers	Allow for in-depth collection of information. Observing the lesson was a way of confirming what I gathered through interviews. A researcher sees with their eyes and perceives with their senses.
2. How often do Grade 3 teachers use resources in teaching reading in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?	Interview, observation, and document analysis.	DH and Grade 3 teachers	Allow for in-depth collection of information. The classroom environment was important as an indicator of how much reading material was available in the classroom A researcher sees with their eyes and perceives with their senses.
3. Which methodologies and strategies are understood by teachers in teaching that may contribute towards the attainment of reading fluency in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?	Interview	DHs and Grade 3 teachers	Interviews attract a high response rate because the researcher is present to administer the interview questions and to ensure that all prepared questions are answered.
4. What hinders learners from reading fluently in Grade Xitsonga (HL)?	Interview and observation	DHs and Grade three teachers	Interviews can allow the researcher access to past events and is flexible. An observation is exact in its nature of work.
5. How do teachers support learners who cannot read fluently in Grade 3 Xitsonga (HL)?	Interview and observation	DHs and Grade 3 teachers	Allow for in-depth collection of information. A researcher sees with their eyes and perceives with their senses.

APPENDIX I: EDITOR`S LETTER

Registered with the South African Translators' Institute (SATI)

Reference number 1000686

18 March 2024

THE TEACHING OF READING FLUENCY SKILLS IN GRADE THREE XITSONGA HOME LANGUAGE

This confirms that I edited substantively the above document, including a Reference list. The document was returned to the author with various tracked changes to correct errors and clarify meaning. It was the author's responsibility to attend to these changes.

Yours faithfully



Dr. K. Zano

Ph.D. in English

kufazano@gmail.com/kufazano@yahoo.com

+27631434276

APPENDIX J: DECLARATION FOR TECHNICAL EDITING

DECLARATION OF TECHNICAL EDITING

23 4TH STREET
MENLO PARK
PRETORIA
0102



10th April 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, Sharon Baxter hereby confirm that I have done the technical editing of the dissertation titled:

THE TEACHING OF READING FLUENCY SKILLS IN GRADE THREE XITSONGA HOME LANGUAGE by **TINTSWALO MAVIS KUBAYI**, Student number 33601313, submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Master in Education in Curriculum Studies at the University of South Africa.

Sharon Baxter

Private Email: nbaxter@lantic.net

Cell: 0722502075