

**EXPLORING APPROACHES TO TEACHING READING SKILLS IN ENGLISH  
AT SENIOR PHASE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MBIZANA DISTRICT IN  
THE EASTERN CAPE: A CASE STUDY.**

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**By**

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## DECLARATION

I Appolonia Nteboheleng Masilo, herein declare that this dissertation is the product of my original work, and has not been submitted for any degree purposes at any other university.

The information derived from published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

Signature:

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Date:

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## **ABSTRACT**

During the process of this research, the main objective was to explore the approaches that the teachers use to teach reading in English First Additional Language (FAL) in senior phase at General Education and Training (GET). This was due to the observed weak performance of learners in reading, especially in GET phases.

To achieve this, 20 participants that consisted of 4 English FAL teachers and 16 learners of grades 8 and 9 were selected. The research focused on teacher perceptions and implementation of language teaching approaches. Learners were involved in the research in order to see whether the used approaches give learners a balanced experience of intensive and extensive programmes.

The study found that there were a number of factors that contributed to the learners' weak performance in reading. These included, among others, lack of balance between intensive and extensive reading programmes, with intensive reading getting more attention than extensive reading; lack of reading material in schools, especially for further exposure, pleasure and amusement; little or no exposure of learners to wider reading; inadequate teacher pre-service and in-service reading programmes; teachers' misconception of extensive reading; learners' home environment that does not encourage reading; lack of parental support and community involvement. These all affected negatively the learners'

development of reading skills.

The study made some recommendations for the improvement of teacher education programmes and reading resources in schools and communities. schools.

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## ACRONYMS

GET	General Education and Training
FAL	First Additional Language
SAL	Second Additional Language
DoE	Department of Education
ECDoE	Eastern Cape Department of Education
DoEAC	Department of Education Arts and Culture
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
LO	Learning Outcomes
AS	Assessment Standards
FLP	Family Literacy Project
ER	Extensive Reading
HSRC	Human Sciences Research council
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SASA	South African Schools Act
NPDE	National Professional Diploma in Education
ACE	Advanced certificate in Education
EDO	Education Development Officer
SACMEQ	South African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

NLT	National Literacy Trust
UK DfID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
NQF	National Qualification Framework
INSET	In-service Education and Training
PEI	President's Education Initiative
NGO	Non- Governmental Organization
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

This study focused on the development of reading skills in English classes at the General Education and Training (GET) level, in South African secondary schools. These classes are studying English as a First Additional Language (FAL) in the senior phase of GET (Grades 7 to 9). The research is presented as a case study of four schools in an impoverished rural district, Mbizana in the Eastern Cape.

The focus was selected for two reasons:

- Reading in any language has been identified as a major weakness in South African learners, and recent surveys have indicated that the problem is not going away (DOE, 2005 a; PIRLS, 2007). It is critical; therefore, that research is carried out into the possible reasons for this situation in South African schools.
- Reading in English is a critical skill for learners in most of South Africa, since the majority of secondary school learners, especially in areas like Mbizana, use English as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) i.e. they need to be able to read texts related to all their learning areas,

and to pursue knowledge in a wide range of texts outside of the classroom.

There are a number of ways in which reading can be researched. A number of international and South African studies (see Ch. 2) have focused on measuring learner performance in reading in L1 and L2. Others have measured the effects of interventions carried out to improve reading skills (e.g. Williams, 2007).

This study did not attempt to measure performance. It was a qualitative case study that explored both socio-economic and educational factors that may be affecting the development of reading among secondary learners. While the focus was on secondary learners, the study may well be relevant in some ways to primary learners. It explored factors in the communities and backgrounds of teachers and learners, as well as looking at the classroom practices of teachers and learners in reading lessons. It did so in order to find out what factors are impeding progress in reading among secondary learners.

## **1.2 Background to the Study**

The context in which the schools are located is critical to understanding the study. Literature related to some contextual issues will be raised in Chapter 2. They are outlined briefly below.

### **1.2.1 Socio-economic Context**

Mbizana is one of the Eastern Cape districts that were under former Transkei. A recent survey undertaken by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) with the University of Oxford, has listed Mbizana eighth on the “most deprived municipalities” in South Africa (HSRC, 2007:2). All the remaining “worst municipalities” for children to live are in the ex-Transkei, except for one in Kwazulu-Natal. There are 136,000 children in Mbizana, according to 2001 census statistics in HSRC (p.2).

The ex-Transkei is affected by a high level of poverty, and the majority of the population lives in rural areas where there is a high level of unemployment. The HSRC survey indicates that over 50% of the children living in the most deprived municipalities come from households where nobody is employed (p. 4). Mostly people survive on subsistence agriculture combined with a cash income or social grant (Lawrence and Moyo, 2006:28). Learners have to spend most of their time assisting their parents in organizing the households’ facilities, like assisting them in fields and at times at home. They end up not having time for reading at home. Schools do not have reading facilities like libraries, electricity and a variety of reading material. Learners are exposed to an environment that does not encourage reading. Parents may not have much interest in reading because some are illiterate, others semi-literate and some are literate but with no particular love and motivation for reading. Some want to read but cannot afford to buy reading material like magazines, newspapers and books. Some cannot even

afford to travel to town because of the distance between their area of settlement and town (DoAC, 2006).

It becomes the responsibility of a teacher to encourage reading and expose learners to extensive reading. For example , when I was a teacher at one of the schools at Maluti, I had to develop a library at school by collecting some reading material, including outdated books, and arranged them in one of the classrooms in such a way that learners and teachers could have any access to them. Some books were requested from neighbouring schools and from book sellers. This was to encourage and stimulate the reading interest in school communities.

The rising incidence of HIV/Aids nationally is also impacting negatively on the families, learners and teachers of Mbizana, Eastern Cape. The higher rate of poor nutrition among children in areas infected by HIV/Aids promotes a cycle of infection and affectedness (Lawrence and Moyo, 2006:29). The loss of parents in families leaves children under the responsibility of grandparents who struggle to cope. In some cases, older children have to give care to the young ones. The survey shows that 25% of the children in the sample live without both parents or live in child-headed households (HSRC, 2007). This situation adds to the likelihood that children do not have time to read at home. Ultimately socio-economic contexts such as these lead to poor attendance, non-participation, high failure rate and high drop-out rates.

The survey of research studies in South Africa, presented in Chapter 2, will provide more findings related to the negative impact of poverty on learning overall, let alone learning in English.

### **1.2.2 Education and Language in Education context**

This study is located in a period of time in which South Africa is experiencing radical transformational policies in education as well as Language in Education, as the government attempts to eradicate the effects of apartheid on both issues. A more detailed discussion of Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) and the new schools GET Curriculum in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) is presented in Chapter 2.

The Language Policy in South Africa, during apartheid, put increasing pressure on especially black schools to use Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. This led to black resistance, as in the Soweto uprising in 1976, and a determination that English should be the language of instruction (Lawrence,1992:102). While understandable, this has posed challenges for the new government and language policy in education.

After 1994, with the first democratic elections, the process of designing a Constitution that would suit the democratic nation, including a more inclusive language policy in education, became central. The Constitution referred to the use of one's own language as a basic human right in the transformation of

education system. In 1997 the national LiEP for public schools was approved and implemented (DoE, 1997). The policy specifies the promotion of South Africa's linguistic diversity and encourages an additive approach to bi/multilingualism within a nation- building paradigm without prescribing to schools how this is to be achieved (Pluddemann, Mbude-Shale, Wababa, 2005: 3). The national language-in-education policy (LiEP) prescribes that:

*[T]he language(s) of teaching and learning in a public school must be (an) official language(s). This leaves the door open to schools to adopt single-medium, parallel single-medium, dual-medium or parallel dual-medium approaches, or a combination of these, whichever is contextually appropriate, feasible and desirable (Pluddemann, Mbude-Shale, Wababa 2005: 03).*

There are further recommendations that indigenous languages should be used as languages of teaching and learning (Alexander in Beckett, 2001: 07). Also the recent announcement made by the minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, in regard to the language of learning and teaching in schools, recognizes the strong need of equal status of languages in schools, and recommended that mother tongue should be the language of learning and teaching in schools up to Grade 6. (Khosana, 2006:4). However, many schools, especially predominantly black schools, automatically opt for English as the language for teaching and learning in schools, sometimes without being aware of the cultural and educational appropriateness of the choice. History and economic reality make it the language

of choice. This practice indicates a gap, at present, between the policy and the practice in classrooms. In this case study, located in Mbizana, English is the language of teaching and learning in schools. Learners are expected to have a good command of English First Additional Language (FAL) in order to perform well in their studies. This leads to the focus of the study. The more learners can read well, in the language of teaching and learning, which is English in this case, the more effective learning becomes.

For learning to become more effective, learners have to be exposed to more reading in the language of learning and teaching. Reading exposes learners to various texts, assists them in gathering more information, and provides them with a skill to read for various purposes. It also assists them to acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in the learning of the language (NCS, 2002). The language of learning becomes crucial in the learning and teaching process.

Reading thus plays a major role in teaching and learning of English as a language and as a subject. Learners need to be exposed to reading programmes that encourage reading both inside and outside the classroom. Learners need to understand the significance of reading for various purposes, like to respond to curiosity about a topic, to follow instructions, to perform tasks, to read for pleasure, amusement, personal enjoyment, to keep in touch with friends and colleagues, to know what is happening in the world and to find out when and where things are; which are some of the characteristics of both intensive and

extensive reading programmes (Hedge, 2000: 195).

Through extensive and intensive reading programmes, learners can also be exposed to various reading strategies. For example, they can be engaged in silent reading and be tasked to read a number of texts of various genres within a short time (Hill, 1989: 52). They can be given skimming and scanning activities to find out particular information, and make predictions of what may happen in a future context. They can also use 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' reading strategies which are good in developing learners' reading strategies. Classroom activities may even expect learners to link the topic of the text to their own experience of existing knowledge. Here they can be given some pre-reading questions to help them (McDonough and Shaw, 1993:109).

Teachers are of utmost importance in helping learners to develop intensive and extensive reading programmes, by selecting or creating appropriate texts, preparing useful reading tasks, setting up effective classroom procedures, encouraging critical reading and creating supportive environment for practising both intensive and extensive reading programmes. The question is, "Do teachers in GET level understand the meaning and importance of intensive and extensive reading programmes in English teaching?" Further, to what extent do teachers themselves read and to what extent does their early experience of reading enable them to encourage learners to read extensively?

It became clear that the distinction between intensive and extensive reading was important to this study. Intensive reading is then defined as reading that exposes learners to reading a text in depth, and familiarizes them with the features of written English. This is done through making them read a variety of prescribed shorter texts with the teacher who helps them to read reflectively. They often pause to consider the opinion and knowledge expressed in the text. The purpose of intensive reading is to develop readers' reading skills, increase their vocabulary, their knowledge of grammatical structures, and linguistic features as well as understanding the cohesive devices in a text. It intends to train learners in the strategies needed for successful reading and therefore involves close study of texts (Hedge, 2000: 195).

Simultaneously, learners have to be exposed to extensive reading programmes. These are reading programmes that assist them to become skilled in collecting and selecting information that is relevant to their classroom studies independently. Extensive reading assists and develops learners' ability to conduct research projects and gather information on their own without close monitoring by the teacher. It further helps them to develop confidence and motivation to carry on learning. An important element in extensive reading is also to deepen learners' enjoyment of reading for pleasure, becoming familiar with a wide range of books (Hedge 2000: 195).

This study looked very closely at the kinds of reading programmes that teachers develop for their learners, as part of exploring how reading can be improved among secondary learners. In Chapter 2, the distinction between intensive and extensive reading programmes, both important for secondary learners, will be analysed in relation both to the demands of the new NCS, and to the needs of learners who have to study in English.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

There is an increasing concern in South Africa about the ability of learners to read adequately, especially when they enter the senior phase of GET. Equally, there is a concern that learners entering FET (Grades 10 to 12) are still struggling with reading problems, both language problems and the ability to read critically. The reading survey results in 2004 (DoE, 2005:6) indicated that South African foundation phase and intermediate phase learners cannot read efficiently.

The crisis in reading may be partly the result of a number of socio-economic factors which have been captured in a survey, called Project Bookworm, carried out by the Department of Arts and Culture (DoAC, 2006), that is reviewed in more detail in chapter 2 (2.3). The nature of the problem varies from one social context to another. The survey refers, for instance, to the fact that 25% of the population stated that they never read in leisure time, and 51% of South African households do not have books. The survey identifies a group of young, mainly black South Africans who stated that they did not read because of financial constraints, lack

of libraries and unavailability of reading materials other than newspapers and magazines. It is probable that the learners in this study fit into the latter category. Likewise, the survey points out that 7% of the population do not read because of illiteracy, and this is likely to be part of the problem among parents in the rural Mbizana district.

It is also true to say that the teachers in this study may fit into the survey's findings that some adults do not have a habit of reading extensively, since the teachers are also operating in an environment that does not encourage reading (i.e. poor, lacking in libraries and book shops). In addition to these socio-economic factors, teachers also require adequate exposure to educational approaches to developing reading skills in learners in rural contexts, and this study highlights some of the gaps in their understanding and practice.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this study was to explore:

- Teacher perceptions and practice of reading approaches in developing learners' reading skills, to see whether they are giving learners a balanced experience of intensive and extensive reading programmes.
- The literate life histories of teachers in order to find out whether these had an impact on teachers' classroom practice.

While the role of parents and communities was not a major focus of the study, it came to light both in the literature survey and in data collected from teachers and learners.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

The main research questions related to the topic are:

- What are teacher perceptions of reading approaches in senior phase at GET level?
- What is their practice in relation to intensive and extensive reading programmes?

However, in order to reach a fuller understanding of the participants, both teachers, learners and indirectly parents, this study included several subsidiary questions as outlined below:

- What is the teachers' personal experience of reading in the past and present (their literate life histories)?

While I did not attempt to prove any conclusive relationship, I was interested to check if the teachers' behaviour in the classroom showed any indication of influence from their personal reading habits.

The other subsidiary questions were:

- To what extent do learners participate in both intensive and extensive reading programmes inside and outside the classroom?
- What roles do their parents and home environment play in supporting them in reading programmes?

The purpose of observing learners' involvement and participation in reading was to enrich the data obtained from the teachers.

### **1.6. Significance of the Study**

The study intends to benefit learners, educators and indirectly the parents. I hope that learners will be able to realize the importance of extensive reading at GET level and engage themselves in authentic reading. Both intensive and extensive reading may be seen as necessary programmes that need equal attention in order to lead to the development of all other reading skills. In indirect ways, the study may influence the Department of Education and schools in developing strategies that will encourage parents and community members to support their children in developing reading skills, and in developing policies to increase reading resources in rural schools. This would improve the chances of learners entering FET with a good foundation in autonomous reading and learning, self monitoring and self assessment. The study could also be of value to educators in other contexts in Africa that are similar to Mbizana district.

## **1.7. Methodology**

Qualitative research methodology was used in this study. It was a case study. Interviews and observations were used as data collection tools. The data was collected from both teachers and learners.

## **1.8. Definitions of Terms**

The following terms are important to the study:

Perception: The process or act of achieving an understanding. It is an awareness of something or some aspects of it through physical sensations and the interpretations of these by the human mind.

Intensive reading: the reading skill that involves closes study of text and familiarizes students with the features of written language (Hedge, 2000:202)

Extensive reading: Wider reading of variety of texts that has the benefit of greatly increasing students' exposure to language. It can be self-motivated; it is further characterized of reading larger quantities of material, constantly over time on a frequent and regular basis, for various purposes (Hedge,2000; Williams, 2007)

Authentic reading: Readings that are published in their original language and not adapted for language learners, e g newspapers, magazines, novels, stories and

poems (Wallace,1992).

National Curriculum Statement (NCS): The newly national school curriculum for South Africa, covering all learning areas.

Senior phase of General Education and Training (G.E.T): This is the last phase of the G.E.T certificate as determined by South African Schools Act (S.A.S.A). It includes Grades 7 to 9.

Further Education and Training (F.E.T): It is made up of National Qualification Framework levels two to four. It is a non-compulsory band. Various providers are involved in this band of education and training. In schools it covers Grades 10 to 12.

### **1.9. Outline of the Study**

Chapter 1 presents the research topic, the background to the case, the research problem and questions, as well as the methodology for the case.

Chapter 2 presents the survey of literature on relevant topics for the case study; particularly the socio-economic and educational issues that underlay the problem of reading in this context. It also surveys international literature on reading and approaches to teaching reading and relates them to the new NCS in South Africa.

Chapter 3 outlines the research design and the approach followed in this study, making it clear that this is an interpretive case study of four schools in a rural context.

Chapter 4 presents the findings and analyses them through triangulation of different kinds of data from interviews and observations.

Chapter 5 raises important conclusions and recommendations for improving reading programmes in rural schools by referring both to the data and to the literature in the earlier chapters.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter surveys the literature related to both contextual factors and the educational issues that impact on reading in the Eastern Cape, and in South Africa. In section A, a number of research studies and reports related to reading in South Africa, as well as international studies, are discussed and their relevance to my study is analysed. In Section B, the conceptual framework for exploring the learning and teaching of reading is presented, and related to the research design and presentation of findings in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

#### **SECTION A: CONTEXTUAL ISSUES**

#### **2.2. Challenges in improving reading ability in South Africa**

In Chapter 1 some of the findings of reading surveys indicate that a substantial number of South Africans experience difficulties in reading.

An important example is the 2007 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). This is a comparative international study of the literacy of young students. It started in 2001 and included 35 countries, which increased to 40 in 2006 (PIRLS, 2007).

South Africa scored the worst out of 40 countries that took part in the study (Business Day, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007). Almost 80% of South African primary school learners did not reach the lowest benchmark, compared to only 6% of the total number of children tested. It is significant to my study that 86 to 96% of children who speak African languages did not reach the lowest benchmark.

It is also important to note that the low marks were not caused by inadequate knowledge of English, since the tests were carried out in all 11 official languages. This indicates that the problem in South Africa is a reading problem, not specifically a language problem.

Apart from the DoE (2005: a) Systemic Evaluation, the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) carried out a study comparing literacy and numeracy levels of Grade 6 learners across 14 African countries between 2000 and 2002. South African learners came 8<sup>th</sup> out of 14 countries, with only 36.7% reaching minimum levels of mastery in reading at Grade 6 level (Mothibeli cited in Pretorius and Mampuru, 2007).

All of the above refer to children who are younger than the learners in my study, but this case study shows that the problem of reading continues to senior phase education as well. The studies provide valuable evidence of the surprising extent of the problem from early primary education upwards. Surprising, based on the recognition that South Africa is a mixture of first world wealth and third world poverty, and it might be expected that some of the wealth is used on improving

the availability of reading resources in deprived “third world” contexts. My study aimed to find out what factors might be contributing to this lack of development in reading.

### **2.3. Reading habits and behaviour in South Africa**

This case study looked at the reading habits of teachers and learners in one rural district of South Africa, as part of a wider examination of teaching approaches. However, a study commissioned by the Department of Arts and Culture (DoAC, 2006), called Project Book Worm, and covers the whole first world/third world perspectives of the country. The study looked at literacy in all official languages. An important purpose of the study was to assess reading as part of the “broader leisure life and behaviour in South Africa” (p. 21). The study shows a considerable difference in the context of first world South Africa and the context of my study in rural South Africa, where the whole idea of reading is related not to leisure but to studies and work.

The following findings from Project Bookwork are important to my study:

- Of the survey population who undertook a simple literacy test, 92% were able to read. Of the 8% who could not, most had had no schooling. A lack of opportunity to read when younger was the highest association for not being able to read. Most of them were rural black males with lower levels of education, and aged between 35 to 49 years (DoAC, 2006:21). This reflects a section of the kind of community members relevant to my study.

- While the survey found that 65% of the population claimed to have read for leisure in the past month, this might not reflect the context in rural areas (p.24). They claim later in the study that 14% of the total population is committed book readers and these are largely residing in Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Western Cape. It is interesting to note that newspapers and magazines were the most popular items; this study found that those who did read chose newspapers and magazines (see Chapter 4).
- 25% claimed that they never read in their leisure time. This is possibly not due to the fact that they do not want to, but factors such as literacy, limited time available, household chores, the focus on meeting basic family needs and having little or no money to buy books (p.24). This segment is mainly to be found in rural areas, of which Mbizana is one example.
- The survey found that 51% of South African households had no books which cause concern for those wishing to instill a reading culture. This figure is likely to reflect the context of my study.
- The survey identifies a group of young, mainly black South Africans, who are open to reading books but offer reasons why they do not read very often. These reasons are the cost of books, the fact that there is no library, and they lack information on which books are worth reading. This profile is close to some of the learners in this case study.
- The survey identifies a segment that is closed to book reading (p.33). This group comprises 33% of the population and is largely black and more rural

than urban in composition. The majority of these groups do read newspapers or magazines. They see reading as enhancing knowledge, which is probably the view of most adults and learners in Mbizana.

- It is interesting to note that the non-readers in the survey still believe that "book reading develops imagination and knowledge and makes life more fun"(p.34).
- The survey notes that 7% of the population does not read because of illiteracy. Most are over 50 years old and are females. They are an indication of the legacy of apartheid in which they grew up (p.35). These could include some of the parents of learners in this study.
- For many participants in the survey, there was little or no access to libraries, especially in rural areas, and this is a major barrier to the culture of reading. The survey notes the need for improving library facilities and promoting their use. This study in a rural context also takes up the question of library use in Mbizana, making recommendations in Chapter 5.

Project Bookworm was useful to my study in that it reflected some of the problems that exist in rural contexts like Mbizana.

#### **2.4. Intervention strategies to improve reading in disadvantaged contexts**

This section focuses on a number of projects that have attempted to improve the reading situation in both rural and urban contexts in South Africa, Malawi and Zambia. They provide valuable insights for the context of this study.

### **2.4.1. The Family Literacy Project (FLP)**

This important project has been extensively reviewed not only through the Evaluation (FLP, 2006) but by other authors (Desmond, 2003; Pretorius and Machet, 2004).

The project was established in Kwa-Zulu Natal in 2000 to address the problem of low literacy level among children in pre-school programmes. The vision of the project was to establish the idea that literacy is “a shared pleasure and valuable skill “in families (FLP, 2006:3). According to Desmond (2003), the project “attempts to help parents to improve their own level of literacy as well as giving them information on how they can help their young children develop early literacy skills and supporting them as they do so”(p11). The project has a slogan that carries the meaning “Masifunde Njengomndeni” which means “Families reading together” (p.12). This concept would be of great use to any rural community, like Mbizana, as a step towards encouraging families to work together in improving their children’s reading and thinking.

The project established centres with local facilitators trained in adult literacy, using participatory approaches. They held twice weekly groups of adults in which a set of topics of interest form the basis of each session. Desmond (2003) describes a session in which women are asked to begin with what they already know about the topic before moving on to write down the main points from the session. Each session also gives advice on how to help children’s early literacy

development through story telling and games. Each group has a small library from which adults can loan books for themselves and their children. The FLP also has a component known as the out-of-school enrichment programme. Pretorius and Machet (2004) describe its aim as “engaging children in literacy activities outside the formal school context in order to promote their literacy development” (p.130-1). Although this is not a major focus in my study, it would nevertheless be useful to a rural community in spreading the love of reading.

The project also supports a home-visiting scheme whereby their literacy learners visit their neighbours to share information on early literacy and health (p.3).

The most important feature of this project is that of encouraging parental involvement in the literacy of their children. This concept is not unique to the FLP. It is a feature of the work of the National Literacy Trust in the U.K (NLT, 2001:3), and is one component of another South African intervention project in high-poverty township schools in Gauteng Province (Pretorius and Mampuru, 2007), which is discussed below.

#### **2.4.2. Playing football without a ball**

Pretorius and Mampuru (2007), in South Africa, compare reading, in a learning situation where there are no reading resources, with playing football without a ball. Their study indicates that learners of English FAL in high- poverty schools are faced with a number of factors that impact negatively in the development of the FAL. These include among others, poorly resourced schools, inappropriate

instructional methods, print-poor environments, overcrowded classrooms, reduced time-on-task and poorly trained teachers (p. 40). The same factors will be explored in this study.

In order to address the challenge, a reading project was launched in 2005 at Batho Pele Primary School. Its aim was to raise the reading levels in the local school language and in English, and thereby ultimately improve school performance (p. 44). Multi-level approaches were adopted that involve the participation of the learners, teachers and parents. The project includes improving resources as well as building the capacity of teachers. The resource-building component entails making books readily accessible to learners and teacher capacity is built up by starting a school library and establishing collections of books in classrooms. The capacity-building component includes workshops for teachers (raising awareness of the importance of reading, and introducing them to the various reading methods). Learners were also encouraged to read widely and the project instilled in them an enjoyment of reading (p. 44). A computer and library software were purchased. Both N. Sotho and English books were purchased and loaned to learners. At present a collection of 2,500 books has been completed. Out of these 168 books are in N. Sotho (109 titles), and the rest in English.

The project also conducted a number of Family Literacy workshops, similar to the FLP in Kwa-Zulu Natal for parents in order to draw parents' attention to the

importance of reading and to encourage them to read to their children and/or listen to them reading (p. 45). This is also useful to this study as parents' literacy would be developed by such an approach.

#### **2.4.3. An intervention project in Malawi to improve extensive reading**

When faced with similar problems, the Malawian government embarked on a project called Extensive Reading Project (ER) (Williams, 2007: 65). It originated in 1994 when the Minister of Education in Malawi and the UK Department for International Development (UK DfID) decided to put in place a supplementary reading project (p.65). Its aim was to improve the level of English proficiency in primary schools, Grades 4 and 5. In its operation, the six- person Malawian technical committee was established. The committee selected 50 different titles for year four and 50 for year 5, plus two monolingual English dictionaries (The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary for teachers and the Macmillan First Illustrated Dictionary for students). Selected books were to be “appropriate for the officially expected age of the students, not be gender biased, be attractive in terms of production and illustration and with language corresponding to the English language syllabus for years 4 and 5”(p. 65). Although this is a primary focused project, it is still relevant to my study because it is important to think of ways to encourage voluntary reading. In the present context there are no class readers in Mbizana schools.

Contrary to the expectations, however, it is indicated that in Malawi, the overall findings of the monitoring and evaluation exercises are that there did not appear to have been any general improvement in students' reading ability in English through a period of three years, 1996 to 1999. In fact there was a slight decline. However a number of factors that might have contributed to the findings were explained. Among these Williams cited low teacher morale over inadequate salaries, which led to teacher absenteeism (p.73). An important factor was the inadequate training of teachers who took part in the project and had little idea of the principles of extensive reading (p.74). Teachers felt that they should concentrate on getting learners through the examinations and did not see how extensive reading contributed to this. My experience and the data from my study show a strong similarity of views with the teacher respondents in Mbizana.

Williams (2007) makes a critical point about the reluctance of teachers in the project to accept a new teaching style, one that was not "culturally" appropriate i.e. it involved learners working independently and sometimes silently, rather than being led into activities by the teacher (p.75). In Section B some South African researchers and academics raise issues of "teacher identity" that are extremely relevant to Williams' findings.

Williams' study does not imply that extensive reading is ineffective in improving reading ability. Instead, he claims that the project was not "appropriate for its intended context" (p.75). This indicates that precautionary measures need to be

taken in the implementation of the curriculum in South Africa. These will be discussed in Section B of this chapter, and will inform Chapter 5.

## **SECTION B: READING IN THE LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING**

The Section above shows some of the challenges facing learners in reading, especially but not only in English. This makes this study important even though the learners are in GET (Senior Phase). They continue to have difficulties with a skill that they depend on for learning in all learning areas. It is not possible to focus on one language skill, however, without understanding the LiEP and the new curriculum in which it is located. This Section therefore begins with an analysis of these before focusing on reading.

### **2.5. Language policy in South African schools**

Language policy in schools before 1994 was based on the principles of apartheid that intended to reinforce the physical segregation with a separation of the education systems (Davenport cited in Lawrence, 1992:103). English and Afrikaans were then made the languages of learning and teaching in South African black schools, after using home languages in the early years of schooling. This policy lasted until the year 1994, which is the year that marked the political change in South Africa that resulted to the development of the new constitution. The new South African Constitution Act (No 58 of 1995), in brief, is developed in such a way that it prioritizes, among other principles, the principle of human rights and equality of human status. It recognizes all 11 official languages

and gives them the same status at national level. It mostly promotes the development of the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages (Pluddemann, Mbude-Shale and Wababa, 2005: 2). The Constitution then resulted in the development of the National Education Policy Act (No 27 of 1996), new Language –in- education policy (LiEP) (DoE, 2005 b: 4; Pluddemann, Mbude-Shale and Wababa, 2005:5). The policy specifies that all children are to have equal right to mother-tongue as languages of teaching and learning at school (Pluddemann, Mbude-Shale and Wababa, 2005:5). The policy further promotes additive bilingualism, where children’s mother tongue plus another language is introduced. It also prescribes that the language(s) of learning and teaching in a public school must be (an) official language(s). It is indicated in this policy that learners for the first two years at school, have to take one approved language as a subject, then from Grade 3 upwards learners have to take at least two languages, one of which has to be the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). This concept of additive bilingualism has a soundly researched background. According to Cummins (cited in Pretorius and Mampuru, 2007:39) there are about 150 empirical studies in the past 30 years that “show beneficial effects of additive bilingualism on students’ linguistic, cognitive or academic growth.”

The policy within NCS (DoE, 2002a: 5) recommends that all learners have to take at least one African indigenous language as a subject for a minimum of six years by the end of Grade 9. The policy here aims at ensuring that all learners,

Afrikaans and English speakers in particular, are at least communicatively proficient in a third language, as a means of contributing to non-racism and intercultural communication in a multilingual society (Pluddemann, Mbude-Shale and Wababa, 2005:5).

The policy appears to address the language issue in South Africa, and according to Huegh:

*On paper it appears that finally in South Africa we have come to a point at which we can set straight our disastrous education system and guarantee all children equal access to a meaningful passage through school (Huegh in Buckettt, 2001: 19).*

However the implementation of the policy is faced with some challenges because English remains the language of learning and teaching in many South African schools beyond the first three years of schooling. Some of the challenges to the implementation of the new policy may be the lack of Learner Support Materials (LSM) in African languages, and an inadequate number of teachers that are trained to teach in two languages (DoE, 2005 c).

There is a further complication raised by Lawrence (1992). The fact that the apartheid regime had an LiEP that used mother tongue instruction, followed by Afrikaans or English, meant that many black parents still feel a reaction against

mother tongue instruction (p.103), and there is still a need to carry out advocacy campaigns to raise awareness of the educational values of learning in a mother tongue. For economic reasons as well, there is still a strong push for English as the sole LoLT (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999:220). Mbizana district is one example in the Eastern Cape Province where English is the language of teaching and learning in schools, starting from Grade 4. Learners are expected to have a good command of English FAL in order to perform well in their studies.

## **2.6. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS)**

South Africa has gone through a long process of curriculum reform since 1994. In order for the LiEP to be developed and implemented in schools, it has been essential for the NCS to lay out a clear framework for introducing home language, FAL and Second Additional Language (SAL) programmes at different levels.

The Critical Outcomes that lie at the heart of NCS form the basis of learning and teaching in any progressive educational system. They require learning to identify and solve problems, organize and manage themselves and their work effectively; collect, analyse and critically evaluate information; communicate effectively; use science and technology effectively and critically; demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems. Any glance at these Outcomes shows immediately how important the reading skill is throughout the curriculum. In

particular the ability to read extensively, covering a wide range of different texts is clearly going to be necessary for learners.

The Critical Outcomes are actually implemented through the Learning Outcomes of each Learning Area. This is illustrated by the Languages NCS (First Additional Language) (DoE, 2002b). The six Learning Outcomes, focusing on the different language skills, language structure and use, are integrated within a learning programme.

The Outcomes that are of special importance in the development of reading in Grades 7 to 9 are:

- Reading and Viewing where learners will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts (NCS links this closely to the writing outcome);
- Thinking and Reasoning where learners will be able to use language to think and reason, as well as to access, process and use information for learning. This is particularly valuable for using language across the curriculum;
- Language Structure and Use where learners will be able to use the sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts.

This is likely to be achieved through the intensive reading programme

(DoE, 2002 b: 84- 85)

The first two Learning Outcomes mentioned above clearly aim at producing critical readers and learners, but the third Outcome is also important in this because learner will start to analyse language more critically through intensive reading. All are therefore important and form the focus of classroom observation in my study.

### **2.6.1. The reading resources specified in the NCS**

The curriculum has provided teachers with a variety of activities to perform in order to achieve the expected outcomes. For example learners are expected to read texts, interpret and analyse information in the text, and use it for their studies (DoE, 2002 b). The curriculum recommends the use of oral, visual and multimedia texts as material that can be used. The oral texts include, among others story books, fables, legends, poems, reports and events. Written/ visual material on the other hand includes newspapers, magazines, play-scripts, charts, diaries, books (fiction and non fiction), cartoons, diagrams, graphs and charts. Multimedia material includes children's television programmes, television advertisements, films and videos, CD- ROMs and internet. Such material facilitates the implementation of the curriculum and assist learners to read wide for various purposes. Authors like Williams also cite the availability of reading material as major resources that were needed to facilitate the implementation of the Malawian supplementary reading project (Williams, 2007). Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) also compare reading without resources with "playing football

without a ball” (p.56). This confirms the need for a wide range of reading material in the process of developing reading skills.

In this study, the kinds of reading materials were an important feature of classroom observations to see whether it was a factor impeding the implementation of NCS in schools.

### **2.6.2 The kind of teacher envisaged for NCS**

Moreover the new curriculum envisions teachers who are qualified, competent, dedicated and caring (DoE, 2002 a). They would fulfill the roles of being mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and Learning area or Phase specialists, as outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators (cited in Lewin, Samuel and Sayed, 2003: 28).

Contrary to this envisaged teacher, the majority of teachers currently employed by the Department of Education received training under the apartheid government. These teachers were mostly either unqualified or under qualified when their qualifications were evaluated according to the requirements as prescribed by the National Qualification Framework (NQF) (Parker in Lewin et al. 2003: 25). Strategies to retrain and develop these teachers were developed and approved. For example the National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE)

was approved to upgrade and retrain 80 000 teachers who did not meet the grade of being professionally qualified (a minimum of four years' Full-Time Equivalent training) (p. 30). When the new curriculum was introduced, the DoE and the provincial departments undertook various orientation programmes and in-service Education and Training (INSET) workshops with foreign funding and using NGOs to provide assistance (p.30). The report of the President's Education Initiative (PEI) (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999) on the research conducted on the implementation of the new curriculum indicated a serious shortcoming in the preparation of teachers for the implementation of the new curriculum (p.30). This indicates that the type of the teacher envisaged by the NCS is not the teacher currently in all the classrooms. The research conducted in this study contributes additional data on whether teachers were able to implement the reading curriculum.

Williams (2007: 74) also indicated that another factor that contributed to the failure of the Malawian supplementary reading project was the deficiencies in teacher training. The teachers' training sessions were of insufficient duration to allow participants to gain insight into the principles and purposes of Extensive Reading. However, Williams noted another possible reason for the failure of teachers to implement the project. He saw the reluctance of teachers to give up their traditional teaching style i.e. whole class directed by the teacher as an example of an intervention that did not take into account the current context of teaching and what teachers saw as culturally appropriate (p.74). This is similar

to a finding in a group of South African academics whom Jansen (in Lewin et al. 2003:119) refers to in a chapter on teacher identity. Academics such as Samuel (2001), Carrim (2001), Soudien (2001), Mattson and Harley (2001) have all contributed to an understanding of teacher identity as a problem in implementing curriculum change (p.119). By teacher identity they mean:

*....their sense of self as well as their knowledge and beliefs,  
dispositions, interests and orientations towards work and change  
(Drake, Spillane and Ackles cited in Lewin et al. 2003:119).*

The Mbizana study looked at the issue of teacher training, in-service and pre-service, of the teachers in the sample; it looked also at the extent to which teachers understood approaches to teaching reading and to what extent they put them into practice.

The final success of the NCS and of the teachers implementing it depends on their ability to produce the kind of learner envisaged. The new curriculum planned that the national South African identity is built on values that underpin the constitution. It envisages learners who are inspired by these values, and act in the interests of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice. “ The curriculum seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled,

compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen” (DoE, 2002 a: 3).

The development of young critical readers in the language classroom would contribute in important ways to achieving this important social goal. More recent research into critical reading processes is therefore important to this study.

### **2.7. Theories about the reading process**

Before focusing on the reading skill, it is important to note that the learners in this study are not primary literacy learners; they have had four years of learning English; thus the goals of the NCS are more advanced literacy.

This study also recognizes that there are many approaches to teaching language, some of which have been used in South Africa e.g. audio-lingualism based on a behaviorist learning theory; grammar based cognitive learning, and various forms of communicative language teaching. However, because this study is focused on ways of developing critical readers, the main focus of this section is on an approach closely linked to the communicative approach, i.e. interactive learning and teaching.

### **2.7.1. Definitions of the reading process**

Authors like Carrell, Devine and Eskey (1990); Grabe (1993); Goodman (1967) Widdowson (1979a) as cited in Hedge (2000:188); Wallace (1992: 4) define reading as not a fixed attribute that readers have and are able to change. Rather, they define reading as complex set of skills that are closely tied up to our family, our past experience of reading, our access to resources and our purpose of reading. Wallace (1992: 4) further defines reading as interpreting; the reader needs to work out the meaning of a text. So, to Wallace, “reading as interpreting, means reacting to a written text as a piece of communication” (p.4). South African authors, Inglis, Thomson and Macdonald (2000) also see reading as an interactive process where there is a dynamic relationship with a text, as the reader struggles to make sense of it. It is referred to as a “kind of dialogue between the reader and the author that makes the reader develop further the general world knowledge and socio-cultural ethics, norms and values” (p.73).

Reading plays a major role in developing learners’ basic language skills. i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing, thinking and reasoning concurrently. Reading enables learners to read texts with understanding, interpret and summarize what has been read. Reading as further defined by Goodman:

*... is a psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader constructs. There is thus an essential interaction language and*

*thought in reading. The writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought.*

*(Goodman in Carrell, Devine and Eskey, 1990: 12).*

It is through reading that learners are exposed to various texts from different contexts and write down their responses to ideas in the text. Reading becomes one of the powerful ways of receiving ideas, information and stories. This definition makes reading an important exercise that helps readers understand the world better. This study in Mbizana becomes crucial in identifying reasons why learners cannot perform well in reading, and why they may not be able to interact as actively to texts as these definitions suggest.

The definition of reading as an interactive process between the reader and the writer has led major authors such as Hill (1989); Hedge (2000: 18); Wallace (1992), to perceive reading as an effective exercise only if it is done for a purpose (although they accept that one purpose is simply the pleasure of reading). For learners of English FAL, it becomes even more important to read not only for information, pleasure and interest, but also to learn English. It is when learners are exposed to various reading material and strategies that they find reading meaningful and effective. The more learners are exposed to printed language, the more they are able to work with the collected information and create new knowledge. Inglis, Thomson & Macdonald (2000:67) also support that in order for

learners to read well even in their home language, they need to enjoy reading. The more they read, the more they enjoy reading and the better they become.

### **2.7.2. Further understanding of the reading process**

The definition of the reading process above highlights the fact that reading is not passive; it involves interaction of the reader with the message of the writer of a text. Psycholinguistic research over recent decades has given valuable insights into the way that readers use top down and bottom up processes of decoding the message in a text (Carrell, Devine and Eskey, 1990:2-3).

A bottom-up approach was popular for many years in the more traditional audio-lingual and grammar based methods of teaching language and literacy. The bottom up approach views reading as a “decoding process of reconstructing the author’s intended meaning via recognizing the printed letter or words” (p.2) i.e. building up a meaning from the smallest units of language (e.g. phonemes, morphemes, lexemes). However, the bottom-up reading approach was criticized for being heavily influenced by the behaviorist theories and as such, neglects other important aspects of the reading process, such as interpreting from context and schematic knowledge.

Top-down reading emerged as a result of this dissatisfaction and from a greater understanding of the importance of psycholinguistic and socio-cultural factors in the reading process. This is essentially a concept-driven, top down pattern in

which “higher level processes interact with, and direct the flow of information through, lower level processes” (Stanovich cited in Carrell et al.1990:3). The psycholinguistic theory of Goodman and others (e.g. Smith, 1971 and Anderson, 1978) recognized the reader as an “active participant in the reading process, making and confirming predictions, primarily from his or her background knowledge of the various linguistic levels” (p. 3).

Both top down and bottom up reading are relevant to the learners in my study because lessons based on bottom up reading expose learners to language structure, as required in NCS Learning Outcome 6 (see Appendix H). This would normally occur in an intensive reading lesson. On the other hand, a top down reading process is essential for a more advanced learner, since it gives learners an opportunity to draw on experience and background knowledge they already have to predict what is contained in a written text. In this reading strategy readers would check the prediction against the text itself, as they read, to either ‘*submit*’ – confirm to the text or be ‘*assertive*’ – reject the text. Top-down reading strategy emphasizes that readers work downwards from an overall, global idea of what they think a text will be about (Carrell, 1988:101). The strategy allows the reader to bring to the text the existing knowledge in order to make sense of the text, sometimes guessing meaning by using existing knowledge of language and content.

Theorists cited in Carrell (1988:101) have discovered that the combination of both top-down and bottom-up reading strategies is essential for effective reading. They claim that text comprehension is achieved through the interaction text-based (bottom-up) and knowledge-based (top-down) reading process. They further argue that it is important for readers to develop rapid and accurate feature recognition of letters and words. The more efficiently the reader uses bottom-up processes, the more effective he/she becomes in using a top-down reading process. This means that the good reader will not only decipher the meaning of individual lexical item but will have a clear idea of the overall rhetorical organization of the text (bottom-up reading). The reader will, at the same time, involve actively his knowledge of the world, plus past experiences, expectations and intuitions, to arrive at a meaning of the text (top- down reading)(p.101).

The psycholinguistic explanation of the two reading processes depended on another important concept explained in the schemata theory. In order for reading to be effective, the reader's and the author's knowledge and understanding of the world should be considered (Carrell, 1988:101). When the reader and the author understand the world from the same background, having the same knowledge and experience, reading becomes easy, and interesting. The 'schema' allows the reader to predict with ease what may happen in a future context.

Wallace (1992) explains this by referring to Widdowson's definition:

*The mind stimulated by the key words or phrases in the  
Text or by the context, activates a knowledge schema*

*Widdowson (in Wallace, 1992:33)*

Schemata allow us to relate incoming knowledge to already known information (Wallace, 1992: 33) and this covers knowledge of language and texts (e.g. different genres) as well as "the whole range of knowledge of the world....".

The theory of schemata takes the reader's idea of the interactive reading process a stage further by proposing that efficient readers are able to relate the text to their background knowledge of the world. For example, when one reads a text in which the word 'school' is central, once schema is activated, one would immediately think about the learner, classrooms, the teacher and books. But in a situation where the author uses the word 'school' in a different context (where young men are taken out to the mountains and educated about manhood), then it becomes difficult for the reader to make sense of the text. Then, that clearly means that in the process of reading, the learners bring their expectation, knowledge, attitudes, and emotions, which influence their interpretation of the text and their own construction of what they experience (McDonough and Shaw, 1993:107; Inglis et al. 2000: 157; Carrell et al. 1990).

Wallace (1992:33) notes that it is important for teachers to note that learners have to use schemata to read between and beyond the lines. If, most of the time, there is a gap between the schemata of the writer of texts and that of the learner readers, it becomes very hard for the learner readers to experience reading as a positive, sense- making activity. Therefore classroom readers need courage and opportunity to access what they already know in order to respond to new information, and relate it to the unknown (p.33).

The above theory of reading indicates all the processes that a learner in any language needs to experience in order to become an efficient and effective reader. The process also is most appropriate for the requirements of NCS (2003) in South Africa; a curriculum that expects to develop learners who are able to analyse and interpret texts, to search for information and to communicate knowledge.

In relating it to the context of this study, it provides an important theoretical background to the interviews and observations that I carried out in Mbizana. To understand why reading may be a problem in some parts of South Africa, it is necessary to find out whether teachers are aware of what they have to cover in their reading programmes, and whether they are applying the approaches that have emerged from the research into language skills, specifically the interactive approach to teaching and learning reading, which is discussed below.

### **2.7.3. Interactive Approach: the journey to becoming a critical reader**

The research into communication and the emerging understandings of what it means to teach communicative competence as indicated in Eastern Cape Department of Education Conference (2005:13) have resulted in a number of broad principles that can be described as communicative and interactive approaches in language teaching. The two terms overlap in the literature but Carrell et al.(1992) use the term ‘interactive’ more specifically to refer to the way a learner develops an understanding of a text by using a number of strategies described in the section above. The way I use ‘interactive’ in this section includes some of the broader principles of communicative teaching, but also focuses on the specific meaning of a learner interacting with a text.

It is also a term that has begun to be used in local discussions of reading. At a recent DoE conference (DoE 2005c) the interactive approach was described as one that leads to a meaningful interaction between educators and learners, and brings about effective communication in English FAL. According to this discussion, it involves free voluntary reading, where learners can become good readers by reading a variety of reading material (p.13). It introduces learners to a variety of reading material and reading styles.

The South African Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach, as presented in DoE (2002a), is then one that coincides neatly with what can be loosely called an interactive approach. It encourages learner-centred practice where learners

usually work with authentic materials in small groups or in pairs (DoE, 2005c). They are exposed to communicative activities and receive practice in negotiating meaning. They learn to use the language appropriately for a given social context (Craft, 2000: 66).

In relation to the reading skill, this approach further involves teaching and learning strategies that allow learners to be engaged in collaborative learning. It employs both top-down and bottom-up readings processes and maintains the balance between the two (Eskey in Carrell et al. 1990: 93). This approach believes that good readers are both good decoders and good interpreters of texts. Their decoding skill becomes more automatic as their reading skill develops (p. 93). The advantage of distinguishing between the use of prior knowledge (top- down processing) to facilitate the simple recognition of words, and the use of such knowledge to facilitate higher level interpretations of texts is indicated (p. 93- 94).

Once the reader has understood the text, the Interactive approach, using some of the activities of communicative approaches, further provides teachers with an opportunity to guide the process of learning, while learners provide outputs such as dialogues, role play and games. Teachers facilitate learners' learning by managing classroom activities, setting up communicative situations related to the reading text. Learners become actively engaged in negotiating meaning. Language is learned for communication, and linguistic competence is coupled

with an ability to convey intended meaning appropriately in different social contexts (Richards and Rodgers, 1986:71). Learners work on speaking, listening, reading and writing from the beginning.

This is an appropriate way to achieve the new curriculum's critical outcomes that envisaged that learners must work together with others as members of a team, group, organization and community; and that learners would organize and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively (DoE, 2005b).

An interactive approach to developing reading proficiency is related to the principles involved in becoming a critical reader. Critical literacy is an increasingly important part of an educational system that strives to transform learners, teachers and society into active participants in a newly democratic country. Critical literacy is clearly heavily influenced by the work of Freire, who believed that developing literacy was one route to empowerment (Freire cited in Wallace, 1992:104). In South Africa, this approach to education in general is developing in importance and language specialists such as Janks (1991) and Comber and Simpson (2001) are exploring the implications of critical literacy for South African classrooms.

While critical literacy is not a direct focus in my study, it is important to note that the LO s of the DoE (2002b) are essentially outcomes that include the aims of critical literacy i.e. developing a learner reader who is able to interact with a text

in an inquiring and independent way, to challenge its meaning (Wallace, 1992:45), to recognize bias and the social context in which the text is situated (Wallace,1992:25), to combine new with existing knowledge and to pose and solve problems through negotiating meaning.

The effective implementation of the interactive/communicative approach as required by the new curriculum is of major importance in this study in relation to the reading skill. The study looked into the extent to which teachers understand this approach and the way they put it into practice in the classroom situation. In order to do this, the study examined the two different kinds of reading programmes described below.

### **2.8. Classroom practice: Intensive and extensive reading**

All of the above is relevant to the way reading programmes should develop at GET level in South Africa. Both intensive and extensive readings are procedures that are implied in the new curriculum learning outcomes, some of which are focused on language structure and usage LO 6 (intensive) as well as reading and viewing (LO3), and thinking and reasoning (LO5), which refer mainly to extensive reading (DoE, 2002: b) . Intensive reading as defined by Hedge (2000:205) is a reading programme that is classroom based and focuses mainly on the development of text structure, text purpose, and reading for information and interpretation. Extensive reading on the other hand, is defined as self motivated reading, done out of interest, pleasure and love of reading (p. 205). It exposes

learners to wide range of reading material, assisting to collect, interpret and analyse information for more knowledge. Williams (2007) has a similar definition but suggests that classical extensive reading lessons allow learners to choose what they wish to read and the teacher plays a minimal role in the lesson. An extensive reading programme assists learners to achieve both LO s 3 and 5 (DoE, 2002 b).

Looking at intensive reading, it is seen as reading that involves the class with exercises to respond to, either individually, or in groups, or even at home. The exercises mainly focus on the development of awareness of the structure of the written texts in the language and to be able to make use of these structures (Hedge, 2000: 205; Carrell and Askew 1998:10). It also familiarizes learners with the features of written language, language structures, understanding of grammar in language, use of time signals, and identification of various genres (Hill, 1989: 16; Farrant, 1991:10; UFH, 2001).

On the other hand, extensive reading focuses on the motivation and ability to read a range of texts in the language of teaching and learning, ability to adapt reading styles according to range of purposes and apply different reading strategies appropriately. It also incorporates the ability to collect, organize and analyse information for their studies. This indicates the appropriateness of an interactive and critical approach to reading as described in 2.7.3.

Extensive reading can be further developed by engaging learners into various reading strategies such as *skimming*, that can be used to assist the learner to get the global impression of the content of a text; *scanning*, that can assist the learner to search rapidly through a text to find a specific point of information; '*top-down*' (schematic) and '*bottom-up*' (linguistic) reading, receptive and interactive reading strategies (Hedge, 2000: 195).

When learners are exposed to extensive reading in particular, they are made to understand the reason why they have to read a number of texts and genres other than the ones prescribed for their classroom activities in their respective grades. This extensive reading further exposes learners to various purposes of reading, like reading to get information, to respond to curiosity about a topic, to follow instructions or to perform a task, to read for pleasure, amusement, and personal enjoyment; to keep in touch with friends and colleagues; to know what is happening in the world; to find out when and where things are and most importantly to collect information related to their studies independently (p.195). It is further characterized by Hedge (2000); Carrell, Devine and Eskey (1990) as reading that:

- exposes learners to a wider range of readings,
- encourages learners to read for various purposes, including reading for pleasure and entertainment,
- increases their reading speed,
- makes them read a larger quantity of various texts and,

- develops within them love of reading.

Extensive reading also enables learners to gather knowledge and information on their own, analyze and summarize, and present it even without the assistance of a teacher. It further encourages learners to be responsible for their own learning, enabling learners of English as FAL to acquire knowledge of the language. Freire and Macedo (1987:33) believe that this can be done without even attending the formal classroom. Although this refers to adult learners, when senior phase learners are exposed to this reading strategy, their reading skill will develop gradually, and by the time they get to tertiary institutions, they should be able to manage their own learning.

Extensive reading even assists them to find their own direction for learning. They can easily relate to others, find personal meaning in content and experiences and commit themselves to their studies without any form of extrinsic motivation (p.33).

On the whole, reading skills are developed through both intensive and extensive reading experiences. However, although intensive reading forms a good foundation for reading, Freire and Macedo, along with most reading specialists, do not think that it should be the only reading procedure that learners are exposed to, for it often slows down the reader's reading speed and wider grasp of a narrative (p. 33).

In the context of this study extensive reading has to be developed in classroom and be continued outside classroom through reading activities. This was an important focus in the classroom observations in this study.

### **2.8.1. Activities to develop intensive and extensive reading programmes**

My study looks in detail at the activities that the teachers employ in order to implement effectively the intensive and extensive reading programmes. For both intensive and extensive reading programmes to be effectively implemented, learners should be engaged in various reading activities.

These reading activities should be structured in such a way that reading becomes a continuous process. For intensive reading, learners should be exposed to various genres (Mosala, Paizee and Peires 2001: 97). They should be familiarized with language structure and grammatical rules. Activities like reading and analysis of shorter texts, reading of comprehension passages, answering of questions related to the passages, vocabulary building and grammar activities are appropriate for intensive reading. Pre-reading questions, in-reading and post-reading questions should be done regularly. Skimming and scanning of shorter texts, predictions and analysis of texts are also done on regular bases (Mosala et al. p. 97; DoE, 2005c).

It should be noted that strategies and skills used for intensive reading may also be suitable for extensive reading development. What makes the difference is the

purpose of reading. For example, in both programmes, learners may skim, scan, predict and guess meanings from the text. With intensive reading, the purpose of reading activities is to equip and develop learners with language structure and reading skills, while with extensive reading the purpose is to give learners opportunities to use all their reading skills by setting them different activities, such as projects, and by exposing them to various genres. Extensive reading also develops their independent learning strategies, for instance coming together without the teacher to search for information out of school (Moore and Wade, 1995:403). What this study wanted to find out is whether teachers understand and implement these activities in alignment with the language Learning Outcomes.

This brings us to the understanding that setting a specific purpose for reading plays a vital role in the development of reading skills. Reading should be done for various purposes, so that at the end, the reading skills match the reading purpose. For example, we may not read the poetry the same way we would read the job advertisement in a newspaper (p. 403).

Extensive reading activities should be structured around reading materials that display authentic features which are characteristic of 'real' text. Reading activities should promote and encourage the negotiation of meaning and the assimilation of new information and/ or pleasure (McDonough and Shaw, 1993: 104; Richards and Rodgers, 1986:76). Such activities include tasks where learners compare

sets of pictures and noting similarities and differences; working out a likely sequence of events in a set of pictures; discussion sessions; dialogues and role plays; vocabulary building activities; simulations; skits, improvisations; and debates. Dramatizations, story telling and reading texts and regular reviewing of the read passages, are further reading activities that can be employed to develop extensive reading (DoE, 2005c).

Such activities would eliminate the traditional way of teaching language, which many teachers were exposed to. These traditional methods of teaching language would encourage the teacher to use the same language pattern that would be repeated several times in a rather contrived way, making the whole text seems awkward and inauthentic. According to McDonough and Shaw (1993:104), the main disadvantage with such prepared text for learners' reading activities is that, when it comes to the choice of the topic, learners are either presented with over-familiar material which does not focus on what learners can bring to the text, or the content is inconsequential for them. There is no real interaction that takes place between the writer and reader. Learners' attention is drawn into the structural usage and sentences are strung together in isolation with little attempt at coherence (p.104). In that way, texts become objects used by the writer to provide information to the reader, who becomes the recipient of information without bringing anything to the text. Reading activities are now designed to encourage close interaction between the reader and the text (p. 104). This interaction should be informed by activities that are based on the principles in

2.7.2 above, which encourage the reader to use his/her existing knowledge and to question the social context of the writer of the text to determine its possible bias and cultural leanings as recommended by Wallace (1992).

### **2.8.2. The role of the teacher in the reading programmes**

All the above- mentioned activities indicate that the teacher has a major role to play in the classroom for the development of learners' reading skills. It is the responsibility of the teacher and the school to develop learners as active and critical readers. The role of the teacher in this matter cannot be under-estimated. The DoE (2005b) recommends that teachers first have to provide a model of how experienced readers can go about finding reading material that they are enthusiastic about. Language teachers should collect reading material of various types, refer learners to various texts and help them, through various activities, to develop a critical understanding of texts. The teacher should engage learners in classroom activities that make them refer to other readings for more knowledge and information. Text books should not be the only source of reference for classroom activities, other reading material should be used as reference in order to expose them to wider reading and advance their reading scope (DoE, 2005b). They should become familiar with different genres (Wallace, 1992:30). In order for teachers to be effective in supporting extensive reading, they should themselves be engaged in extensive reading in real life. The teacher needs to have a love of reading in order to instill love of reading among learners (Hill, 1989: 33). My study, therefore, examined teachers' personal attitudes to reading.

Teachers should further expose learners to various reading strategies and activities that develop them as experienced readers. They can do this by organizing the classrooms as sets of communication and communicative activities. They monitor activities, encourage learners to read, support and assess their reading performance continuously. They should encourage them to collect information, analyze and organize their ideas independently (DoE, 2002b). Teachers can also involve learners in other reading activities, like pre-reading discussions, where a brief background of the author and setting of the book is given; predictions, where learners may skim and scan the book after which they predict what may be expected in the text. Pre-questioning can also be employed, where the teacher would provide learners with questions before they read the text to stimulate and provoke their interest in reading the text. During text reading, the skill of guessing meaning from contextual clues can be practiced (Hill, 1989: 46).

Teachers can further use intensive reading to develop extensive reading by formulating programmes over a specified period to involve preparatory activities. Learners can be engaged in an intensive reading of an extract, as individual silent reading in class, and private reading at home with exercises set by the teacher and follow-up work. All these activities give learners an opportunity to be engaged in wider reading of various texts (McDonough and Shaw, 1993: 105).

Learners can also be provided with time for short interviews with individuals about their reading. The teachers can then use this time to recommend books, advice on reading problems and encourage critical reading and group discussions as they read books. The book conference can even be conducted in their home language. In this way the home language would also be used as learners' existing knowledge to support learning of the first additional language (Pluddemann, Mbude-Shale and Wababa, 2005).

Reading syndicates are another reading strategy that can be used to develop extensive reading. In this activity, learners work as groups where group members read different books and share their experiences. All these strategies, including skimming and scanning reading, text scrambling activities, information gap activities and linking of the topic (of the text) to learners' own experience, can be employed to develop extensive reading at GET level (Nunan, 1991: 73). At the end of each activity, the teacher leads in the debriefing of the activity, pointing out alternatives and extensions and assisting groups in self- correction discussion, where learners assess their own performance. The teacher plays a major role in assisting learners to develop a love of reading.

The teacher further plays a support role by assisting learners where they cannot perform. Learners are assisted to use dictionaries, compile their own dictionaries and increase their vocabulary. The teacher further plays a mediation role and help learners to develop the ability to use the material tools (books) and the

psychological tools (language teaching tools) effectively in intensive and extensive reading through using various teaching strategies. Learners are encouraged to conduct reading discussions as pairs and groups, with the teacher assisting them to learn from each other. Vygotsky (1962) refers to this teacher mediation, as a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where children can do and achieve attainably with the support of other learners and adults.

The role of the teacher in such a reading programme is therefore extremely flexible. While there may be times when the teacher stands in front of the class, he/she will also be walking from learner to learner for individual discussions and from group to group. The teacher will also be a planner of activities to cover the development of a range of reading skills and to lead the learner out of the class in search of information from other sources. This study focused in depth on the role of the teacher in reading classes to ascertain whether any or all of the above activities were covered.

## **2.9. Conclusion**

This literature review has provided an introduction to the South African context and the problems facing learners in the development of the reading skill. It has shown the research studies that give evidence of the scale of this problem. In Section A, the review offers useful ideas of how literacy can be encouraged through intervention projects and family based literacy programmes. It highlights the lack of reading resources as the greatest challenge to reading in rural areas.

Section B provided a guide to the language policy in South Africa and the importance of reading in FAL in the new NCS. It has also raised important theories and principles underlying the reading process and how these impact on an interactive approach to teaching reading.

The chapter indicated that although intensive reading contributes considerably to the development of learners' language skills, these are incomplete if a reading programme does not expose learners to extensive reading experience. Extensive reading needs to be introduced to learners early in the GET level, and this study investigates the extent to which teachers understand this at Senior Phase level.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology selected for this study. It refers to the paradigm, methodology and methods of collecting data that were selected for this study. The research is identified as a case study and presents the sampling of the schools identified. It also discusses the profiles of the schools selected. Research principles like triangulation, principles of ethics, limitations and delimitations of the study are specified in this chapter.

#### 3.2. Research Paradigm

The model according to which a researcher views the world and the object of research within a particular discipline is called a “paradigm” (de Vos, 1998:12). A paradigm therefore provides a framework for research that arises from the researcher’s view of the world and response to the world (epistemology/ontology); the methodological choices are led by these points of view (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:1).

There are three major points of view which are commonly used in researching the human behaviour. These are positivist, interpretive, and critical research and theory (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000).

This study is classified under the interpretive paradigm, for the reason that it is characterized by a concern for understanding individuals' behaviour (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000: 22). The interpretive paradigm was adopted because it does not focus on isolating and controlling variables, but rather on harnessing and extending the power of ordinary language and expression to help us understand the social world we live in (Van Rensburg and Gough, 2001:9). This is a characteristic of this study which looks into ways the teachers understand experiences, develop perceptions, and put into practice language learning and teaching approaches for developing reading skills. Interpretive research enriched my understanding of the roles that intensive and extensive reading programmes have in the learning of LoLT.

The interpretive paradigm assumes that individuals are "unique and complex" Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 23), hence this study explored teachers and learners as unique and complex individuals; for instance looking at the impact of their home environment on their attitudes and competence in reading, and finding a number of factors that caused problems for them.

Unlike the positivist paradigm, interpretive research and theory does not build a universal theory but theories are grounded and emerge from practical situations (p.23). This research paradigm is further characterized by making use of qualitative methodologies to collect and analyse information and perceptions. It

involves understanding human behaviour in context and positions the researcher as the primary instrument by means of which information is collected and analyzed (Silverman, 2000: 111). Most importantly, interpretive research involves taking peoples' subjective experiences seriously as the essence of what is real for them, making sense of their experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they tell (Seliger and Shohamy, 1990: 118).

### **3.3. The choice of methodology**

A view of the world and of research that leads to an understanding of human behaviour suggests that an interpretive methodology is appropriate. This study therefore is based on a qualitative interpretive methodology.

Methodology basically refers to data collection techniques such as observation, testing, doing a survey or interviewing informants. However, more than referring to particular techniques, it provides reasons for using such techniques in relation to the kind of knowledge or understanding the researcher is seeking (Van Rensburg and Gough, 2001:4). John Van Maanen (1995) (cited in Van Rensburg and Gough (2001:5) suggests three types of work that methodology entails. These are: field work (producing data by listening to, or questioning informants), headwork (thinking about methodological issues, theories, analyses and criticisms on how research should proceed), and text work (documenting the information). All the three types of work are applicable to this study as data was collected through field work, analysed and recommendations were made.

### **3.3.1. Qualitative research**

This study was underpinned by qualitative research methodology and also took the form of case study, based on the understanding that qualitative research understands the human phenomena in context, using context- derived terms and categories (Seliger and Shohamy, 1990:119). The teacher perceptions and practice of intensive and extensive reading were studied on sites because qualitative research wants to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in the real world, in their natural setting (p.119).

Qualitative research methodology accommodates the fact that human behaviour is too complicated to measure reliability in a simple survey or experiment and is never completely predictable (Seliger and Shohamy 1990:119). Also this approach is more relevant to this study for it attempts to present the data from the perspective of the observed group/ groups so that the cultural and intellectual biases of the researcher do not distort the collection, interpretation, or presentation of the data (Jacob, 1987 as cited in Seliger and Shohamy, 1990:118).

This study used qualitative research methodology to uncover teachers' understanding of approaches related to intensive and extensive reading, which would encourage learners to read for extending their knowledge and for pleasure.

In this study, qualitative research techniques were used within the framework of a case study.

### **3.3.2. Case study**

A case study is referred to as a study of an instance in action. It can be a group, a context or an event. A case is concerned with a particular phenomenon in the world (Terre Blanch, 2006: 291; Creswell, 1994). It is further defined as:

- A unit of human activity embedded in the real world;
- which can only be studied or understood in context;
- which exists in the here and now;
- that merges in with its context so that precise boundaries are difficult to draw (Gillham, 2000:1).

A case can be an individual case, a group, such as a class or a family; it can be an institution or a community. All these are single cases. There are also multiple cases, where a number of pupils; single parents; or several schools are studied (Gillham, 2000:1).

This research is seen to be a multiple case study because it looked into the teacher perceptions and practice of developing reading skills in four GET schools. One teacher and four learners of the same class were identified in each school. Therefore 'teacher in the English classroom' was the case to be studied.

This included exploring their personal reading experience.

Identified teachers were investigated as individuals because it is believed that individual performance is more revealing as each individual may reveal their own individual pathway to develop language competence and interest (Seliger and Shohamy, 1990:125).

Learners on the other hand were interviewed as groups. This group interviewing did not overlook the fact that group dynamics are powerful distorting forces. If there are marked differences in status within the groups, and there are those that are of high status, who either dominate proceedings or inhibit others, that should be noted. If that behaviour is observed, then that information itself is valuable in the research findings (Gillham, 2000: 78).

However the group composition in this study took into consideration that learners in the groups were in the same class and were more or less of the same status. Gender equity was considered and as such, each group was composed of two boys and two girls.

It is considered that the aim of this study is not to generalize, but to understand the particular case in all its complexity. In human behaviour generalization from one group of people to others, or one institution to another, is suspect. There are elements that are specific to the various groups or institutions, which make them

respond differently to various situations (Gillham, 2000:6).

The advantages of a case study as outlined by authors like Stake (1995); Meriam (2002:8); Gillham (2000:8) are:

- It concentrates and analyses a phenomenon or social unit as an individual, group, institution, or community and seeks to describe it in depth;
- It recognizes the embeddedness of social truth hence the best case studies are capable of offering some support to alternative interpretations;
- It emphasizes qualitative data to give meaning to results; and
- It also puts an emphasis on the importance of context in shaping behaviour.

### **3.3.3. The case study: profile of four schools**

There are 118 Junior Secondary schools in the district. Four of these schools were identified for this study, and their profiles are presented below (reasons for their selection are given in section 3.4).

All four schools are situated in a rural setting. The school nearest to town is about 26 (kms) away from Mbizana and the furthest school is 43 kms away. They have no basic facilities like water, sanitation and electricity. They are classified as quintile 1 schools i.e. schools for the poorest of the poor communities that do not pay any school fees. Most children are entitled to the government's child welfare

grant. The majority of the community is illiterate, but has an interest in education. They support their children by providing them with minimal school needs they can afford, even though they have few means to do so. There is a library in Mbizana town, but it is accessible to only those learners who stay around town. Even those learners do not utilize it fully; maybe because they are not well motivated to use it. The bookshops that are in town sell mainly stationery, magazines and a few text books, basically because nobody buys books.

### **School A**

School A is a junior secondary school with a roll of 404 learners, boys and girls. There are only 5 teachers in the school, teaching classes from grade R- grade 9. Two teachers handle foundation phase and the rest rotates from intermediate to senior phase. Each teacher has six and more classes a day, teaching between 40 and 64 learners in each class. The teacher for English FAL is an elderly teacher who was first qualified in 1965, and is about to retire. Her highest qualification is National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE), a two year upgrading course for under-qualified teachers.

There are text books that are provided by the department for reading and learning in school. On one occasion in 2007, the department provided packs of newspapers to assist learners to read more than text books, but during the study, these were found still packed in the principal's office. The school has no class or school libraries.

### **School B**

School B is also a junior secondary school with a roll of 533 learners, boys and girls. There are 10 teachers in the school. Each teacher teaches about 45 to 50 learners. The teachers' workload was not as heavy, when compared with other schools. The school is new, well built and clean, although the teachers still lack teaching resources and furniture. The school performance is generally known to be satisfactory, according to end year progression schedules, and learners are well disciplined. The observed teacher is middle aged and qualified in the year 2000. He obtained a teachers' diploma and a first degree with UNISA.

The school depends on text books supplied by the department for language learning. There were no extra reading materials; even the newspapers were not available. The participant teacher, when interviewed, claimed that the principal found that all the newspapers had already been taken by the time he visited the District office. There are no class or school libraries.

### **School C**

School C is a big school of 798 learners, boys and girls, and 19 teachers. It has adequate classrooms, principal's office and a staffroom. It is a well managed school with a highly committed staff. The school is involved in various curricular activities and produces good results. It is well supported by the local municipality as well as the department of sports and culture at provincial level because of its

participation in extra- curricular activities and the quality of its products. The observed teacher is qualified, with a teachers' diploma, B.A and ACE certificate i.e. the certificate course taken after graduating. He is a young dedicated teacher who is organized and disciplined in time keeping.

Learners use text books for language learning. There were newspapers that the principal collected from the district office for learners' wider reading, but the respondent claimed that they had received only one batch since the beginning of the year. Teachers, in the school have an advantage of making copies of some texts because the school has got solar electricity, and therefore they have a photocopying machine. However, there are no school or class libraries.

### **School D**

School D is a small school of 345 learners and 6 teachers. It has got some teaching and learning resources like solar electricity, television, and a small science kit. Each classroom has about 32 learners. The school principal is active and dedicated. He manages the school well and ensures that teaching and learning is effective. He makes sure that the school is provided with current teaching and learning resources like T.V. and a photocopying machine. He teaches English FAL in all senior phase classes. He participated as respondent in the research. He has a teachers' diploma and B.Ed Hons. Learners were well disciplined.

Text books were mainly used as the reading material in school. The principal also

provided some extra reading material by bringing to school some newspapers, in addition to the ones he collected from the district office. When I visited the school for this study, it was like the other schools in that there was no library or any indication of reading material that was accessible to learners. The outdated textbooks were packed in the principal's office, as in all other schools.

### **3.4. Sampling : choosing the four schools and participants**

Sampling is defined as a decision about where to conduct research and whom to involve. Nunan (1992) further refers to it as a strategy in which particular settings, persons or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be accessed well from other choices. It involves people and settings, events and processes.

I used purposive and convenience sampling. The schools were selected partly on the basis of convenience in that my work takes me to rural schools. They also represented a necessary range of academic performance in that two were known to be high performance schools and the other two were average, according to end year performance schedules.

Within each school I carried out purposive sampling of teachers and learners i.e. the teachers all represented teachers of English FAL, across grades 8 and 9 within senior phase. The learners represented both male and female categories, and were selected from Grades 8 and 9 in which the sample teachers taught. An

equal number, 4, was chosen from each school. Once the basis for selection was explained, the teachers selected learners randomly within those parameters.

### **3.5. Data collection tools and procedures**

Observations and interviews were used as data collection tools, and data was collected from both teachers and learners.

#### **3.5.1. Observation Schedule design**

The observation schedule was used to answer the research question, *'What are teachers' classroom practices in developing intensive and extensive reading programmes?'*

An observation schedule was designed (see Appendix C). Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006:310); Gillham (2000:8) define observation as an accurate watching and noting of phenomena as they occur in nature with cause and effect. They also see it as the most direct way of obtaining data. It is not about what people have written or what they say, but it is what they do (Gillham, 2000:8).

Based on the understanding that the interpretive methodology emphasizes studying the phenomenon in a naturalistic way, observation becomes the most relevant approach to be applied. Also, the fact that observation takes place while things actually happen, and thus brings the researcher even closer to the action, makes it even more suitable for this study. In observation, I was present in the setting being studied, and that serves as an advantage for this study, because I

gained first hand information. (Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim, 2006:310).

Spradley (1980) as cited in Kelly (2006: 309) distinguishes between descriptive observation, focused observation and selective observation. He defines descriptive observation as an exercise that enables the researcher to observe general concepts that normally leads to descriptive account. The observer here merely describes in detail everything that s/he witnessed usually in sequence. This type of observation was appropriate for this study for I was enabled to prepare observation questions to guide my observations e.g. '*Does the teacher include intensive and extensive reading programmes in teaching of English FAL?*' The descriptive observation gave me an opportunity to observe and gather the general understanding of how the teachers include intensive and extensive reading activities in teaching reading skills, and which activities are specifically set for the purpose of engaging learners in extensive reading inside and outside classrooms. These descriptive schedule questions were influenced by Hedge (2000), Hill (1989); Wallace (1999) (see questions 4, 5, 6 on Classroom Observation Schedule, Appendix C).

Focused observation was also employed. This type of observation involved preparing more particular questions about general events (Kelly:310). These questions enabled me to look at a particular kind of interaction e.g. *Is there any way that the learners are made to consult their parents or community members*

*for further reading and information?* (See question 10 on Classroom Observation Schedule). This was a particular requirement of NCS (2005 b) and was also part of the design principles in the FLP (2006).

The observation tool was implemented with caution as I was aware of the fact that qualitative researchers do argue that observation may not be a very reliable data collection method because different observers may record different observations (Silverman, 2005: 111; Nunan, 1992: 162). But in this study it was expected that observation would give a broad understanding of how intensive and extensive reading are developed in an English First Additional Language classroom.

### **3.5.2. Administration of classroom observation schedules**

For a list of dates of the classroom observations see Appendix B. The classroom observations were carried out before the interviews.

My first step was to ask all the teachers for their permission to observe 4 of their reading lessons i.e. a total of 16 lessons were observed. Dates were decided at the initial meeting. The day before, I reminded the teacher of my visit. On arrival I discussed the procedures with the teacher e.g. whether I would be involved or not (I was a non-participant observer). I also asked permission to use a tape recorder. I explained that at the end of the observations, I would interview them.

On arrival at the class, the teacher would introduce me to the class and encourage them to participate as usual. The learners were generally curious but they did participate. They sometimes looked at me when they answered questions. At the end of each lesson, I would arrange a time for the next observation.

I made every effort to ensure, through these procedures, that the teachers and the learners saw me not as an EDO, but as a researcher who was not going to make judgements of their classroom behaviour.

### **3.5.3. Interviews**

Interviewing is another data collection tool that was used with the intention of answering the research question on teacher perceptions of reading approaches.

The interviews also focused on subsidiary questions such as:

*What are the teachers' personal experiences of reading in the past and present?*

The interviews also focused on the extent of language teacher training that each teacher had experienced.

Interview is said to be a process of investigation, where the interviewer asks questions and the respondents respond in a face-to-face situation (Nunan, 1992: 166). Out of various types of interviews like open, informal, unstructured, semi-structured and highly structure interviews, this study employed the semi-structured interview.

The semi-structured type of interview consists of specific and defined questions determined before hand, yet at the same time allows some elaboration on the questions and answers (Silverman, 2005:127; Nunan, 1992:166). In this study, this type of interview allowed me an opportunity to ask prepared questions, and make follow-up questions where necessary (see transcripts Appendix G).

Further, it is believed that other domains of meaning besides that, which is accessed through listening to words, need to be employed. We see people, and through seeing we can understand the body movement and the ways that bodies interact in the social environment (Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim, 2006:297). It means that other than listening to teachers' responses in the interview sessions, the teachers' body language was observed. I did include examples in my notes on non-verbal communication where necessary while the interview is in process, but did not find them playing an important role in my analysis.

#### **3.5.4. The design of the teacher interview schedule (Appendix D)**

The first part of the schedule focused on the teachers' personal reading experience and was influenced by Project Book Worm (2006); FLP (2006) and by literature on the LiEP (ch. 2 sect. 2.5). These questions were:

- Is there any form of reading that you were exposed to, at home in your childhood?
- Can you explain when you first learnt how to read and what was your parents' or guardian's support towards your reading?

- What kind of reading material were you exposed to when you were young?

The second part of the schedule asked teachers questions about their teacher education programme and focused on the important concepts of extensive and intensive reading. The teachers were also asked for their perceptions of what learners enjoyed in the classroom and the extent to which they read outside the classroom. This took into account the need for both programmes as per the requirements of LO s in the NCS (DoE, 2002b). At the level of data analysis, these responses were compared with the approaches described by authors such as Wallace (1999); Hedge (2000) and Williams (2007). Concepts such as availability of reading material and learner' exposure to wider reading was considered influential (ch. 2 section 2.8).

### **3.5.5. Administration of teacher interviews**

The teacher interviews took place after the classroom observations. They took place in the classroom after learners left the room. Before the interview I explained that I would ask some questions about reading and I encouraged the respondents to relax. I explained that they could respond in isiXhosa or English. I recorded the responses. The responses were recorded by means of an audio recorder after seeking consent from the interviewee. In this way the data recording procedure used in the interview did not interfere with the process of conducting interviews. Where necessary, during the interviews, I asked probing

questions.

See Appendix B for a list of dates and times of interviews.

### **3.5.6. Focus Group Interview: Learners (Appendix E)**

Group interview approach is another useful way of expanding the sample of respondents. It was used to collect data from the learners about whether they read anything other than textbooks, what languages they read in, where they find reading materials and the extent of parental support. This intended to respond to questions like:

- What reading material do you read at home, other than your text books?
- In which language do you enjoy reading most?
- Where do you get the reading material? These questions were influenced by the programmes like FLP (chapter 2)

The learners' responses were compared with teacher responses about learners, and with the classroom observations. This affirmed teacher responses about learners' reading habits, and the extent of parental and community support for learners' reading at home.

### **3.5.7 Administration of learner group interviews**

The interviews were administered after the teacher interviews. They took place in the classroom with the selected learners in Grades 8 and 9 (see 3.4). I talked to

them first and calmed any nervousness. I used English but allowed them to use isiXhosa and if they did not understand questions, I used isiXhosa. I recorded the interviews with their permission. They were curious and wanted to be part of the interviews so participation was lively, except in School C where they were more reserved. I tried to probe and at the end they responded.

### **3.6. Data Analysis techniques**

In the presentations and analysis of findings, research questions were used as sub headings.

In the classroom observations, I summarized the findings as they appear in Appendix H. I then used a list of categories to analyse these findings; the list of categories was linked to the NCS and literature on teaching methodologies.

The following is a list of categories:

- Planning for intensive and extensive reading activities (DoE, 2002b: 84-85)
- Provision of reading material (DoE, 2002b).
- Activities that are used for intensive reading (Hedge,2000:205; Hill, 1989:16; Mosala et al.2001:97)
- Activities that are used for extensive reading (Williams, 2007; Hedge, 2000:205, Carrell et al. 1990)

- Continuous and democratic participation of learners in reading activities (Hill 1989; Freire and Macedo,1987:33; Wallace, 1992: 25)
- Provision of further reading activities and follow up work to learners to be done after school and at home (DoE, 2002)
- Utilization of learners' experience as source of reference (Wallace,1992: 45).
- Ways of making learners consult their parents or community members for further reading and information (DoE, 2002).
- Assessment and constructive feedback given to learners on tasks they did (NCS, 2002)

The teacher and learner interview responses were presented and interpreted according literature resources.

However, the most important feature of the analysis was various steps in triangulating the findings. In a small scale case study, it is difficult to establish validity and reliability in any meaningful way, except through the rigour of the methodology. The case serves as an exemplar that can be compared to other case studies in future research. The process of triangulation however does contribute to strengthening the validity of my findings.

### **3.6.1. How triangulation was used to analyse data**

In this study the use of observation and interviews to collect data allowed me to

validate my findings through triangulation. Triangulation is defined as a process in which multiple methods of data collection are used with a view to increasing the reliability of observation (de Vos et al, 1998:359). It entails collecting material in as many different ways and forms and many diverse sources as possible. The data is then compared in different ways. In triangulation the same pattern or example of behaviour is sought in the different sets of data.

For example in this case study I triangulated the following sets of data:

- The teacher perceptions of learner reading habits with what the learners said about themselves;
- The teacher perceptions of both intensive and extensive reading with their actual classroom practice;
- What both teachers and learners understand about the reading material that was at their disposal was triangulated with what transpired in the teachers' actual classroom practice (chapter 4 section 4.4).
- What both teachers and learners understood about parental support in the development of learners' reading skills.

The use of this process increases the validity of the conclusions researched. It helped me to understand the phenomenon of intensive and extensive reading by approaching it from several different angles i.e. triangulating the data collected from observing teacher practice in the classroom situation, and the data from interviewing both teachers and learners (Terre Blanch, Kelly and Durrheim, 2006:

278).

### **3.7. Ethical consideration**

I observed the provisions related to research ethics, especially because qualitative research methodology, which underpins my research, entails gaining access to teachers' and schools' privacy and privileged information. The respondents' right to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent and security was observed (Strydom et al, 1998:24) (Appendix A). All the data collected relating to the study was held in confidence and used for academic purposes only. I wrote letters to each of the four schools I intended working with, to request for permission to gain access to teachers and learners. The purpose of the study was mentioned, and the teachers' and learners' identity was promised to be kept anonymous (Terre Blanch, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006: 278). It also became my responsibility to ensure that my roles as an Education Development Officer (EDO) did not overlap with my roles as a researcher. I monitored my roles as EDO by first making the principal understand that my visits that week had nothing to do with supervision of teachers, nor with the Performance Assessment of teachers. When I arrived at school I tried to avoid formalities of being welcomed by the principal and accompanied to the classroom. It happened once i.e. on the first day only. That put the principal at ease because sometimes he would not even realize that I was at school.

### **3.8. Delimitations of the study**

The study was conducted in four Junior Secondary Schools in Mbizana district of Education in the Eastern Cape. All the schools were based in rural context.

### **3.9. Piloting the tools**

I conducted a pilot observation and interview on 22nd September 2007, to determine the quality of my observation schedule, length of the interview, suitability of questions, ethical issues and practical issues related to the use of a tape recorder. I also intended to find out which tool would need further development (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2003: 160). My pilot observation and interviews were conducted in one school within Mbizana district, with the English FAL teacher and Grade 8 learners. This school became School C in the main study but different learners were used for the main study.

The school was selected purposively and conveniently in order to meet the needs of my study. It was chosen because it is along the main road, not very far from the district office and easily accessible. It seemed to be a school in which the Principal was actively involved in encouraging learners to read and participate in reading competitions in the district.

#### **3.9.1. Observation in the Pilot Study**

In lesson observations, the lessons were conducted over a period of four days. Activities that cover the classroom practice, such as reading of passages by

learners as individuals and as groups, pre-reading questions, comprehension questions, summarizing of texts and post reading questions were observed. The schedule was of vital importance to assist me to observe what was relevant to my study.

The lesson observation led me to make some changes. I had to shift my attention from solely extensive reading to both intensive and extensive reading because I realized that reading activities focused mainly on intensive reading (refer to appendix H). I realized from the pilot that it was possible that extensive reading was not done at all at GET level. I decided to restructure my working title by looking into the impact of both intensive and extensive reading programmes instead of focusing on extensive reading only.

### **3.9.2. Interviews in the Pilot Study**

I used the semi-structured interviews in order to address my research question, 'What are teacher perceptions of intensive and extensive reading programmes in English FAL in senior phase at GET level?' Both teacher and learner questions were open-ended and assisted me to get an in-depth detailed account of teacher perceptions of intensive and extensive reading.

The pilot interviews made me restructure some of my questions in order for teachers to understand what I meant. For example the question on the teachers' level of exposure to pre-service and in-service training programmes was made

clearer by referring them to NCS workshops as in-service training programmes.

### **3.9.3. Summary of adjustments**

My pilot observation and interviews made me consider my initial working title, *Exploring teacher perceptions of extensive reading in English as FAL at GET level*. I realized that it was possible that extensive reading was not done at GET level. I decided to restructure my working title by looking into the impact of both intensive and extensive reading programmes instead of focusing on extensive reading only. My working title altered through the study until it omitted mention of these two types of reading programmes and focused on “approaches” which covered both.

#### **3.9.3.1 Note taking and tape recording.**

Initially I was reluctant to take notes and tape record the participants in the process of interview even though participants were consulted and agreed. However I noticed in the process that my participants enjoyed being recorded and had no problem with me taking some notes. Instead learners in particular were excited by the fact that what they said, was so valuable that it was written down and tape recorded.

I also realised that I should take time to expect an answer, and probe in order to get in depth information.

Generally, the pilot observation and interviews revealed some strengths and a few areas for development. Some of strengths were that the observation schedule was very effective and assisted me to collect the data I was looking for. It led me to realize that there was possibly no extensive reading done inside and outside the classroom. The pilot gave me experience in observing according to the schedule and in transcribing the interview. I also observed the ethical issues, and gained an insight into type of data I could expect.

### **3.10. Limitations of this study**

The research was conducted with teachers in rural schools, who were not easily accessible especially on rainy days. Because of this, I had to allocate more time in order to cater for such cases. I also observed that, the fact that I am an Education Development Officer (EDO) as well as a researcher, did not make teachers feel comfortable and they could have been reluctant to give the correct data. I managed to handle it with great care because I expected it. It became easy for me to reassure the teachers during our first meetings by clarifying the purpose of the visit. I also assured them that the research had nothing to do with monitoring and evaluating their work, but focused mostly on the approaches they used in teaching English FAL in senior phase. I also tried at all times, not to behave like EDO when conducting the research. I did my best to help them see me as a colleague during research visits.

The national teachers' strike of May to August 2007 became a challenge to my

study. Teachers were away from classes for about two months, and I could not visit schools for data collection in the planned period. That delayed my study and I had to extend my study for another year.

### **3.11. Conclusion**

This chapter outlined and defined the research paradigm that underpins this study. It particularly focused on the research methodology i.e. qualitative research methodology. It further detailed the characteristics of qualitative research methodology to justify its relevance to the study. Observation and interviews were outlined as the methods to be used for collecting data. The case study method utilized in this research was reviewed and justified. Other important aspects of the research methodology, like validity and reliability, triangulation and sampling have been discussed. Ethical consideration and piloting are other key features of the research that were discussed in this chapter. Finally the chapter stated the delimitations and limitations of the research.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings, and analyses and interprets the data of this study. The research findings and interpretations respond to the research title:

*Exploring approaches to teaching reading skills in English at senior phase in Junior Secondary Schools in Mbizana district in the Eastern Cape: a Case Study.*

The main research questions related to the topic were:

- *What are teacher perceptions of reading approaches in senior phase at GET level?*
- *What is their practice in relation to intensive and extensive reading programmes?*

Subsidiary questions were:

- *What is the teachers' personal experience of reading in the past and present (their literate life histories)?*
- *To what extent do learners participate in both intensive and extensive reading programmes inside and outside the classroom?*

- *What roles do their parents and home environment play in supporting them in reading programmes?*

#### **4.2. Profile of Teacher Respondents.**

The research was conducted in 4 schools with 1 teacher per school. Interviews were carried out with 16 learners (4 learners per school). There were two young teachers, one middle aged, and one older teacher as can be seen in Table 4.1. They were all qualified teachers, based in rural schools. Schools that participated were selected according to purposeful and convenience sampling as explained in chapter 3.

**Table. 4.1. Respondent Profiles**

<b>TEACHER</b>	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>QUALIFICATION</b>
Teacher 1	School A Grade 8	59	Female	HPTC (std 6+ Higher Primary Teachers' Course), NPDE
Teacher 2	School B Grade 9	42	Male	STD; BA
Teacher 3	School C Grade 8	33	Male	STD, BA, ACE
Teacher 4	School D Grade 9	29	Male	STD, BA, B.Ed Hons

The information in table 4.1 shows that teachers 3C and 4D were the youngest teachers, while teacher 2 B was middle aged and teacher 1A was the eldest teacher. All the teachers had at least matric plus teachers' diploma as their minimum qualification, and Teacher 4 had the highest qualification, Honors in Bachelor of Education (B Ed Hons). Teacher 1A had Higher Primary Teachers Course (HPTC), a two years teachers' course that was obtained after STD 6 in 1994, and National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE), that was offered to all experienced but under qualified teachers. Teacher 2B had Secondary Teachers' Diploma (STD) and Bachelor of Arts degree (BA) which he obtained after a teachers' diploma. Teacher 3C had STD, BA and Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), and the last teacher, teacher 4D had STD, BA and B Ed Hons. All teachers teach English as FAL in senior phase at GET level (Grades 7-9).

### **4.3. Data from Teacher Interviews: literate life histories**

This section presents the data from interviews with teachers about their past and current reading habits. Their level of exposure to reading at pre-primary age, their reading habits in school years and the way they currently interact with reading texts were areas of interest.

#### **4.3.1. Exposure to reading in pre- school years: parental involvement and materials**

In responding to a question about early childhood reading:

Teacher 1A said:

*When I was a child I was never exposed to any sort of reading. My parents worked on a farm. We used to spend most of the day with our mother in the fields where she would be working. In the evening we would sit around the fire and everybody would be reporting about the experiences over the day. At the end my grand mother would narrate stories. Most of her stories were folk tales and I enjoyed them so much, especially those that involved animals that could speak and behave like human beings.*

Although teacher 1A was never exposed to reading, she was exposed to story telling at an early age, which can motivate reading at a later stage.

Teacher 2B reported in a similar way:

*When I was a child I never read any book. My father was very rich, with a good stock of cattle, flock of sheep and goats. When I was five years old, I was already able to go out with some sheep for grazing and I enjoyed it so much, My friends and I would not even bother to come back home for lunch. The only time we would be at home would be evening. At that time I would be tired, but still enjoying to answer questions from my father about all the experiences I had from the fields.*

Teacher 4D and Teacher 3C on the other hand, had more support for developing a love of reading, and therefore showed a difference in their youthful reading history from teachers 1A and 2B.

Teacher 3C said:

*My mother was a teacher. In the evening she would sit with some books around her, preparing for the next day's work. I would sit next to her and fiddle around her books and also pretend to be reading. In that way I got familiar to some words even before I went to school.*

Teacher 4D said:

*My father was a teacher. He usually bought himself a Xhosa newspaper, 'Inkqubela' and brought it home. I used to sit by his side as he read and asked him questions. Sometimes he would be fed up with me, but responded. As he dropped one paper on the floor, I would pick it up and asked, why is this person crying? His response would be, "son, the man is faced with a charge for criminal offences, and you know what, crime does not pay. When you live on stealing, you end up crying like that man. You must learn to work hard and never live on stolen goods". As he left his papers, I would then try to read in order not to steal like the man. By the time I went to school, I already could associate the picture of a man on the paper with word 'Indoda' meaning, man.*

What emerged from the interviews was that half of the respondents (2) were never exposed to reading before they started school. They were brought up in an environment that did not encourage reading because their parents were illiterate. Moreover their socio- economic status did not make provision for reading activities. Activities such as working in fields and domestic chores took priority. These teachers never read until they went to school, although they did listen to stories.

This confirms the findings of the national survey conducted by DoAC (2006), which was discussed in chapter 2 section A. The project found that 25% of the respondents claimed that they never read in their leisure time. According to the survey this is possibly not due to the fact that they do not want to, but factors such as illiteracy, limited time available, household chores, the focus on meeting family needs and having little money to buy books (DoAC, 2006: 24). These factors, or some of them, seem to have been important in the lives of the two teachers mentioned above.

On the other hand, the other half of the sample (2) claimed that they were exposed to reading at a very early age. Even though there were no pre- schools, they could identify some words even before they were enrolled in grade I. This supports the vision of The Family Literacy Project (2004) discussed in chapter 2 Section 2.4. The second group of teachers benefited from a situation that FLP recommended i.e. that literacy is “a shared pleasure and a valuable skill” in

families (Pretorius and Machet, 2004: 128). It also supports one of Vygotsky's cognitive theories, that learning starts from birth, and the school has to connect the new information to the child's existing one (Pettigrew and Akhurst, 2000: 111). Collins and Matthey (2001: 66-67) also refer to the importance of home environment in the development of learners' reading skills (Section 2.3).

The teachers' responses further suggested that learners develop a love of reading for pleasure when they are exposed to reading at an early age. Inglis, Thomson and Macdonald (2000:67) support the idea that in order for learners to read well, they need to enjoy reading. Their responses also reflect the most important features of FLP, that of encouraging parental involvement in the literacy of their children (FLP, 2006:3). This concept was also advocated in the intervention project described in Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) and by the U.K. based on the work done by the National Literacy Trust in the U.K (NLT, 2001:3) (see section 2.4).

Teachers were also asked about the kind of reading materials they were exposed to at home. There was no response to this question from teachers 1A and 2B as they were not exposed to reading at that age.

On the other hand, teacher 3C explained:

*Short stories. The exercise of assisting my mother every time she made her daily lesson preparations made me enjoy looking at pictures in books and imagine that I was reading a story.*

Teacher 4D:

*My father's newspapers exposed me to some reading.*

The responses from teachers 3C and 4D illustrated a natural use of a top-down reading strategy in which young readers draw on experience and background knowledge they already have to predict what is contained in a written text. Carrell (1988: 101) further cites that readers work downwards from an overall, global idea of what they think the text will be about. The use of a picture to predict the story was developed at an early age by both Teachers 3C and 4D.

What also emerged was that the two younger teachers were exposed to reading at a very young age. They therefore had already developed preferences for reading material, as well as some basic reading skills, before they went to school. This strengthened the findings, in the first question, that there were two slightly different groups of teachers based on their reading experience. The findings also showed the importance of early reading experience in early development of preferred reading texts.

#### **4.3.2. Teachers' reading during school years**

Teachers' reading habits in foundation and intermediate school phases was another theme that I focused on during the interviews.

Teacher 1A said:

*During my first years of schooling I was very shy and yet I was already old, I was 8 years old. I was never comfortable to read in the class. I would always be the last one to read in class, sometimes when the teacher points at me to do so.*

Teacher 2B said:

*As far as I can remember, it took me time to adjust myself to the school environment. I was so used to the life style of going out with my siblings for cattle herding. School environment was a complete change of life style. I found myself in another world where I had to do things in a formal manner, and reading and writing were some of activities I did not enjoy for some time, especially reading and writing in English.*

Teacher 3C said:

*I enjoyed reading so much. I used to jump first when the teacher wanted a person to read for the class. The books that I enjoyed reading most were the story books written in IsiXhosa. I still remember the story I enjoyed most, the story of 'Mpukwana 'interpreted as "little mouse".*

Teacher 4D, responding to the same question, said:

*I enjoyed reading stories during my first years at school, maybe because I was already familiar to Xhosa books and newspapers. The language that was spoken at school did not differ much from the language I heard from my father at home.*

The data indicates that teachers who never interacted with books before they formally registered at school, lacked confidence and security in reading activities at school. They felt unsafe and insecure in a school environment. This finding justifies the Department of Education's decision of introducing the pre-school grade R before the actual formal school starts, in order to familiarize learners with school environment and expose them to reading material, particularly reading in their home language (Pluddenmann, Mbude-Shale and Wababa, 2005: 16). It also justifies the vision of FLP (2006) that encourages and promotes family literacy" through families and child-to-child groups" before the actual school going age (p. 130). The FLP makes the books available even for babies to ensure that young children are familiar with reading material at an early age.

It also became evident that teachers who were exposed to reading even before they were registered at school, were quick to adapt themselves to a school reading environment. They learnt to read quickly at school and had their preferred reading material. They learnt to read in their home language within a context, first at home and at school. This is recommended by the LiEP that talks in favour of additive bilingualism where children's mother tongue or home

language, is used as LoLT from Grade 1, and another language is introduced at a later stage (see Section 2.5).

#### **4.3.2.1. The teachers' initial language of reading**

The interviews also reflected that the initial language of reading plays a major role in developing learners' love of reading.

Teacher 1A said:

*I preferred reading in Xhosa because that was the language I could understand.*

Teacher 2B said:

*I would rather read in Xhosa at that age. English was much difficult for me.*

Teacher 3C said:

*Isixhosa, because my mother brought Grade 1 Xhosa books home for her preparations.*

Teacher 4D (whose father was a regular reader of newspapers), said:

*Isixhosa.*

What emerged was that all teachers preferred reading in Xhosa when they started at school. In this instance there is no difference between the 4 teachers. They were all exposed to and familiarized with Xhosa reading material in foundation phase classes. Even though teachers 1A and 2B had initial problems

with reading, they showed a preference for reading in Xhosa. Home language serves as a firm foundation for later additional language learning.

Learners in the selected schools in Mbizana are taught in isiXhosa in foundation phase classes but move to English as LoLT in the fourth year of schooling i.e. in Grade 4. The study raises concerns about the wisdom of introducing English as LoLT as early as Grade 4.

#### **4.3.2.2. Teachers' access to libraries during their school years**

Another theme that emerged from this interview was that teachers of English FAL never had any access to libraries when they were still learners at primary school level.

*Did you have access to any library?*

Teacher 1A said:

*I never even knew one. Actually the word 'library' was not even in my vocabulary.*

And teacher 2B said:

*When I was a learner, I knew nothing about libraries. As learners of that time, we even thought that libraries are reading facilities that are meant for white people only.*

Teacher 3C said:

*I never accessed any library when I was a learner.*

Teacher 4D said:

*I did not visit any library. Even my father never said anything about visiting library. I never associated library with black people. To me it was a place prepared for white people only.*

The teachers indicated that they were never exposed to libraries in childhood. They referred to two main reasons for having not used libraries. Firstly nobody encouraged them to visit libraries. Secondly they did not consider libraries as places that could be visited by black communities. Reading facilities such as libraries and electricity were in their view, available only to white people. This finding shows that apartheid deprived them of the opportunity to use the libraries. It was important to find out whether this legacy had lived on in their minds and affected their attitude to utilizing libraries even in the post apartheid period (Chapter 2, 2.3).

The need for a change in mindset among teachers and learners is particularly important in the implementation of the new NCS. This curriculum plans to address the challenges that emanated from the previous education system. It is based on the constitution of the country and has critical outcomes to be achieved by learners across the curricular (DoE, 2002a). The critical outcomes are actually implemented through the Learning Outcomes in each learning area. Learners need to read widely in order to relate the information across the learning areas.

This implies that the implementation of the NCS is based on the availability and use of libraries.

#### **4.3.3. Teachers' current reading habits**

The interviews also focused on the teachers' current reading habits.

*How often do you read as a teacher?*

Teacher 1A said:

*I rarely go to town in the middle of the month; but when I happened to have gone to town, I usually buy myself a magazine.*

Teacher 2B said:

*I read newspapers during my free time, but it is not my priority. I only read when I happened to have bought a paper.*

Teacher 3C responded:

*I read regularly. What I read most are books that are related to my studies. The course on management that I am busy doing privately now, refers me to several books.*

Teacher 4D said:

*I seldom read. I usually buy a newspaper to read, actually have a glance through when there is something interested I missed on TV news, like now there is a hot*

*debate around the ANC leadership, then if I missed news due to whatever commitment, then I'd buy one the next day to read. I also buy myself a newspaper when I want to look for advertisements. Otherwise, I do not read regularly.*

Generally the teachers' responses show that they do not read regularly. They seem to be reading newspapers, magazines and books that are related to their studies. None of them mentioned novels, poetry or story books. Even with the reading of newspapers and magazines, there is no consistency. Their reading habits are affected by the contextual factors like unavailability of reading material and being far from town. This supports the findings of the DoAC (2006) where some government officials indicated that they were unable to read on regular bases because there were no libraries near where they lived and books were expensive to buy. Instead of reading they would rather do something else (see chapter 2, 2.3). It also confirms the findings in DoAC that some young, mainly black South Africans are open to books but offer reasons why they do not read often. They referred to reasons like cost of books, the fact that there is no library and they lack information on which books are worth reading (see chapter 2, 2.3).

**Table 4.2. Teachers' current reading habits**

<b>Schools</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Reading status</b>	<b>Reading material</b>
School A	Teacher 1A	Irregular	Magazine, Newspaper
School B	Teacher 2B	Irregular	Newspaper
School C	Teacher 3C	Regular	Reference books
School D	Teacher 4D	Irregular	Magazine, Newspaper

The table 4.2 above indicates that teachers do not engage themselves in reading for any purpose other than looking for special events at that particular moment. Reading is not done for pleasure in reading freely and voluntarily, which can lead to the acquisition of language (Carrell, Devine and Eskey, 1990: 12).

Contrary to this, the NCS envisages the kind of a teacher that would fulfill the role of being a researcher and a lifelong learner (DoE, 2002 a). The teachers' reading status, as described by the data, is not that of a teacher envisaged by the NCS.

#### **4.3.4. Summary of findings**

The teachers' experience of reading and their reading habits indicate that respondents were not exposed to regular reading. To an extent the respondents were divided into two groups. Teachers 3C and 4D indicated that they were exposed to reading at an early age of their lives, but Teachers 1A and 2B indicated that they never experienced reading while they were young.

What also emerged from this section was that all the teachers learnt to read in isiXhosa and preferred to do so. The respondents never accessed libraries for further reading in childhood. They were deprived of the opportunity to develop their interest of reading for pleasure and for more information. Respondents, who managed to read, read for work and studies. Very few read for pleasure and entertainment.

The next section presents findings related to the teachers' pre- and in-service teacher education experience. This experience would be an important factor in developing their perceptions of how to develop reading skills in FAL (see main research question).

#### **4.4. Teacher perceptions of reading approaches for senior phase at GET level**

In their training programmes teachers were exposed to various teaching and learning approaches, of which some were directly related to reading approaches in English FAL. This exposure influenced the way they understand and implement reading approaches in classroom.

#### **4.4.1. Teachers' perceptions gained from pre-service programmes**

Teachers were asked what approaches to teaching reading they were exposed to during their pre-service programmes in preparation for being English FAL teachers.

Teacher 1A said:

*As language teacher trainees we were exposed to a number of teaching methods. We were trained on strategies to summarize a book, organize the debates, dramatization and language structure.*

A follow up question probed what methods were being referred to.

*I mean methods like telling method, question and answer method and discussion method.*

Teacher 2B said:

*When I was at training college, I was exposed to a number of language teaching methods. These include among others discussions, telling method and question and answer methods.*

Follow up question:

*What type of discussions do you mean?*

Teacher 2B replied:

*For example we would be given a passage to read, discuss the meaning for better understanding and interpretation, then we answered questions, or write a summary out of the text.*

Teacher 3C:

*Narrative method, discussion and interpretations, question and answer, prediction of texts and dramatization are some teaching methods that I can remember.*

Teachers 4D said:

*We were exposed to various teaching methods like narrative and story telling, reading, interpretation and summarizing of texts, dramatization and debates. We also learnt to skim and scan through the text and make predictions.*

In analyzing this data, it became clear that generally, the respondents used the word “method” when they were referring to classroom strategies. They referred to language teaching strategies such as transmission of knowledge which they call “telling method”, question and answer method and story telling strategies. None of them seemed familiar with language teaching approaches like the communicative and interactive approach, which authors like Hill (1989); Hedge (2000); Wallace (1992) perceive as essential for gaining practice in the use of language in reading and other skills. There is even less evidence of activities

developing more advanced critical literacy skills as recommended in Janks(1991) and Comber and Simpson(2001). These approaches are crucial in assisting learners to actively interact with texts. They enable learners to negotiate and convey the intended meaning appropriately in different social contexts (Carrell et al, 1990: 3). This indicates that the pre-service programmes that teachers were exposed to, especially during the apartheid period, did not adequately expose teachers to these language approaches, which were not widely used in South Africa in the previous education system for black learners. Teachers in this study seemed to have only a vague idea of what language teaching approaches are available to them.

However the classroom strategies that the teachers were exposed to did enable them to focus on intensive reading programmes. Through these reading activities learners were able to read short texts followed by comprehension questions. Respondents also had some experience of linking reading to discussions, summarizing and interpretation of texts. These activities are useful for both intensive and extensive programmes.

According to Hedge (2000: 205) strategies like reading of shorter texts, discussions around them and answering of questions based on such texts can be used to develop learners' understanding of language structures and grammatical rules. Respondents, especially teachers 1A and 2B, indicated that they were exposed more to question and answer strategies that enabled them to provide

learners with short texts followed by questions. They further mentioned that the transmission of knowledge method enabled them to present language knowledge to the whole class, while learners listened. Academics such as Samuel (2001); Carrim (2001); Soudien (2001); Mattson and Harley (2001) relate this method to the current teacher identity issue, which presents a problem in the implementation of a learner centred approach (p.119). Teachers 1A and 2B in particular seemed to have a strong bias towards this method of teaching language.

However Teachers 3C and 4D made mention of reading strategies that could facilitate and develop extensive reading, such as skimming, scanning and prediction. But they did not say anything about using such activities to engage learners in the reading of a larger number of reading materials as well as activities to increase their reading speed and develop their vocabulary as recommended by Hill (1999:16). The reading strategies that these two teachers were exposed to in pre-service training reflected some familiarity with the communicative approach. They referred to discussions, question and answer strategy, debates, dramatization and story telling. It was clear that the younger teachers did receive some introduction to innovative approaches as discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.7.3).

#### **4.4.2. Teachers' perceptions gained from in-service programmes**

Participants were asked questions that intended to find out if they attended any in-service programmes that assisted them in implementing intensive and extensive reading programmes and specifically the new NCS.

*How many inservice training programmes did you attend last year ?*

*How many of these focused on extensive reading at GET level?*

Teacher 1A said:

*I only remember one workshop that I attended at Mbizana that focused mainly on development of reading skills at GET level. The workshop was about strategies that can be used to assist learners to read with understanding. A number of language workshops I attended last year were about how to present language lessons following three levels of planning in NCS.*

Teacher 2B said:

*I attended a number of language teaching workshops last year, I think about six workshops, but out of them only one workshop that specifically looked into the development of reading skills at GET level. That workshop was actually an eye-opener to us when we come to reading skills. The rest of the workshops addressed the development of language learning outcomes without isolating 'reading' outcome.*

I probed as to what approaches were recommended.

Teacher 2B:

*It was from that workshop that we learnt about reading strategies such as top-down reading and bottom-up reading. We became aware that the reading process that we had been using all along was the bottom-up reading strategy. We only knew that in the teaching of reading, learners have to know first the letters of alphabet, the words, sentences and paragraphs.*

Teacher 3C said:

*Language teaching workshops do not isolate reading, but language outcomes are addressed in totality as they are related. Otherwise there are a number of workshops I attended for NCS implementation.*

Teacher 4D said:

*I attended about four language teaching workshops, but I can remember only one workshop that looked specifically into the development of reading skills, especially at GET level. Reading strategies like pre - reading discussions, pre-reading questions, predictions, dramatization and debates, top-down, bottom-up and projects reading strategies were highlighted as reading strategies that can be used to develop learners' reading skills. Mostly, reading workshops are conducted for foundation phase teachers. This was conducted by the curriculum personnel in preparation for Readerthon competitions in August 2007.*

It became evident in the analysis of this data that teachers attended about 6 workshops within the district that focused on the development of strategies for teaching language skills. They referred mainly to 2006/ 07 RNCS workshops that focused mainly in the OBE teaching approaches (i.e. learner centred approaches). But out of them only one was directed to the development of reading skill. The one workshop for developing reading skills that the teachers indicated that they attended may be insufficient. This finding supports the Malawi Project, where teachers' training deficiencies were identified as other contributing factors that led to the project's lack of success (Williams, 2007:74).

It is difficult to perceive how one workshop on reading could cover all the needs of the NCS, and the extent to which departmental training is effective needs to be researched. However, the in-service programmes did give teachers some exposure to further reading strategies like pre - reading discussions, pre- reading questions, predictions, dramatization and debates, top-down, bottom-up and project work.

#### **4.4.3. Teacher perceptions of intensive and extensive reading**

The way teachers understand reading approaches was explored more fully with a question that led on from the impact of their teacher education programmes. It was based on the distinction between intensive and extensive reading since that would cover the whole range of reading experiences that learners require.

*What do you understand about intensive and extensive reading programmes?*

Teacher 1A said:

*Intensive reading is the reading that the teacher and learners do in the classroom, focusing on the development of language structure. Extensive reading on the other side is the reading that learners do on their own without the supervision of the teacher.*

Teacher 2B said:

*According to me intensive reading is done in classroom. It is the reading that assists the teacher to expose learners to a number of reading activities and develop their understanding of the language structure. Extensive reading is the reading that learners can do on their own at home.*

Teacher 3C said:

*Intensive reading is classroom based and intends to expose learners to the language structure, and extensive reading is done where ever the learner is, without responding to any classroom activity.*

Teacher 4D said:

*There is no clear distinction between intensive and extensive reading. While intensive reading looks into the development of learners' understanding of language structure, extensive reading develops learners' love of reading. It*

*enables learners to read on their own, without responding to any classroom task like home work.*

I probed as to whether they ever included extensive reading and if so, how; if not why not.

Teacher 1A said:

*Hayi mam, kaloku abantwana xa sebefundile ukufunda eclasini baye bayozifundela bodwa emakhaya.*

Interpreted as:

No Madam, when learners can read in classroom, it becomes easy for them to read on their own at home. There is no need to have activities that focus on extensive reading in classroom as such.

Teacher 2B said:

*Yes I do. I think the activities that I use for developing reading skills in classroom accommodate both intensive and extensive reading. For example if learners read and summarize a comprehension passage in the classroom, the strategy of summarizing they apply in intensive reading activities is also applicable in extensive reading activities.*

Teacher 3C said:

*It is not easy to distinguish between intensive and extensive reading activities in the actual classroom presentation. The bottom line is that reading activities that I present in class focus on developing learners' reading skills. These include both intensive and extensive reading programmes.*

Teacher 4D said:

*Activities that I use in the classroom for language learning develop both intensive and extensive reading. For example when learners interact with a text on the importance of biodiversity in a language classroom lesson, the end results are that those learners are exposed to life species. The language lesson may encourage learners to read more about units of species such as mammals, amphibians, flowers, plants etc. In that way intensive reading developed learners' interest to read broadly i.e. extensive reading. They are able to collect more information on their own, analyze and add it to their notes.*

When analyzing the data it is clear from the responses to the two questions that teachers understand that intensive reading is done in classroom for language structure. The respondents identified intensive reading as a reading programme that focuses on the development of awareness of the structure of the written texts. They therefore understand and agree with the views of authors like Carrell and Askew (1998: 10); Hill (1989); Farrant (1991) interpretation of intensive reading. Both perceive intensive reading as the reading programme that familiarizes learners with the features of the written language, language

structures, and understanding of grammar in language, use of signals and identification of various genres.

The respondents further defined extensive reading as the reading that learners do at home on their own for pleasure and further information. However, they did not associate extensive reading with language learning inside the classroom; instead they saw it as the almost automatic outcome of intensive reading. They claimed that if learners were competent in intensive reading, they would not have any difficulty in reading on their own. They did not really plan for the development of extensive reading in the classroom, as activities which require teacher support.

For example Teacher 3C indicated that there is no clear distinction between intensive and extensive reading activities in the actual classroom presentation. This understanding contradicts McDonough and Shaw (1993: 104) who interpret extensive reading as a reading programme that needs to be developed through exposing learners to various reading activities, using a variety of texts, such as word puzzle; making of collages where learners bring together a number of pictures to convey a message, and other activities based on meaning, and requiring reading and thinking. Teachers' responses did not indicate the importance of identifying the purpose of reading as of vital importance in the planning of reading lessons. Defining the purpose would assist them in differentiating between using a text for intensive reading, or encouraging learners

to search for information or read for pleasure using a wide range of texts in extensive reading.

The teachers' understanding of extensive reading also contrasts with Williams' (2007) view that language classroom activities have to encourage learners to read more widely and for pleasure without much teacher intervention. NCS (DoE, 2005 b) further recommends that learners have to be engaged in activities that aim at developing both intensive and extensive reading. Activities such as skimming and scanning, debates, prediction and dramatization of texts are more relevant because they encourage learners to consult other reading material to gather more information and make further reference (p. 83). These teachers did not have a similar understanding to this curriculum requirement.

#### **4.4.3.1. Perceptions on when extensive reading should be introduced**

The interview also probed the teachers' views on when extensive reading should be introduced. The findings contrasted strongly with the responses to the question above.

*At what grade level do you think learners should be exposed to extensive reading?*

Teacher 1A said:

*As early as grade R, so that they get used to various reading texts at the beginning of senior phase level.*

Teacher 2B said:

*When they get to intermediate phase. It is in this phase that they start enjoying reading stories on their own, composing their poetries and dramatizing stories. Actually it is in intermediate phase where learners even enjoy imitating other characters.*

Teacher 3C said:

*I think it is proper for learners to be familiarized with reading at an early stage of learning. They should be exposed to reading of texts as early as in foundation phase this will assist them to develop love of reading.*

And teacher 4D said:

*I believe that if reading could be made part of learners' life, things could turn around. If children could be provided with reading material even before they go to school that would mean that they grow up having a positive attitude towards books and other related reading material. By the time they go to school they are used to books, libraries, pictures and cartoons. They are able to cut and paste to create stories.*

Generally the respondents indicated that learners should be introduced to both intensive and extensive reading programmes at GET level, from as early as grade R or even earlier than that. This contradicts what they said before, that

learners need not be exposed to activities that develop extensive reading in the classroom. The teachers even recommended that reading materials like picture reading, story books, novels, cartoons and poetry books should be introduced to learners for reading at an early age of schooling. The introduction of learners to such reading material is recommended by Wallace (1992) as reading material that assists learners to develop a love of reading. It would even change their attitude towards books and libraries, and they might start associating reading material with another way of entertainment. They would be able to adapt reading styles according to range of reading purposes (University of Fort Hare, 2001).

The contradiction within teachers' perceptions may be caused by their limited understanding of "extensive reading", as a result of inadequate training. The lack of reading material may be another factor that causes the contradiction. It was evident that teachers were aware that introducing learners to reading at an early age could improve learners' performance in schools, but there was insufficient reading material in schools to make that possible. This may be why teachers in the study saw extensive reading as happening outside the classroom, without their support. It just was not possible to include it in the reading classroom.

#### **4.5. Teacher perceptions on challenges that affect learners' development of reading skills.**

Challenges faced by the teachers in developing learners' reading skills were further explored. They were asked questions that relate to the various ways of

assisting and exposing learners to read more widely. These include more reading materials, and ways in which learners involve themselves in extra reading at home.

#### **4.5.1. Reading facilities**

Teachers were asked:

*How do you assist learners to access reading facilities inside and outside the classroom?*

Teacher 1A said:

*That is a problem. The school has no electricity as yet. It is difficult to have any electronic facilities. We use mainly text books as our reading material. The activity books that have reading comprehension are the main source of reading that we use.*

Teacher 2B, on the same question said:

*We are unable to access any extra reading facilities for now. But we have the hope that the school will be accessing electricity soon. Then we shall be able to buy photocopying machines, T.V and other material that can assist us to access extra reading material.*

Teacher 3C said:

*The school has a serious problem when it comes to reading material. Learners are unable to access anything to read other than their texts books.*

Teacher 4D said:

*So far we still battle to expose learners to extra reading. We try to photocopy them pamphlets from the school photocopying machine, but that is too expensive for the school to run.*

All the respondents indicated that the schools do not have enough reading facilities that expose learners to various reading material. Facilities such as school libraries, photocopying machines and other reading materials were not accessible to them. Mostly the prescribed text books that have classroom activities become the only available reading material for learners to read. Teachers again appeared to understand what they need to do in order to develop learners' reading skills, but lack the resources to implement these ideas. For example the NCS text books that learners use in the classrooms are rich in language activities, a variety of comprehension passages, poems and adverts (Barnard and Bester, 2006). They actually encourage learners to read further in order to get more information, but learners do not have extra reading material to refer to (p. 47). These findings further support Pretorius and Mampuru's study (2007) that learners of English FAL in high-poverty schools have to learn the language in situations i.e. "playing football without a ball" (Pretorius and Mampuru, 2007: 40).

#### **4.5.2. Teachers' perceptions of learners' reading habits at home.**

Another question that was asked focused on learners' home environment in relation to reading. I asked the teachers whether they assisted learners to read at home.

Teacher 1A said:

*Partially yes. I say so because learners' home environment is another challenge. Learners are brought up in an environment that does not encourage reading. They are expected to assist their parents at home on their day to day chores. They have no time for reading.*

Teacher 2B said:

*I do give them activities to do at home, but it does not make much difference because there are no reading facilities such as access to the internet and libraries. These would encourage learners to read more even among themselves.*

Teacher 3C said:

*I try but learners' home environment does not encourage reading. Parents at home are expected to assist their children on some activities at their homes, but this does not happen. Some parents do not even encourage their children to do ordinary home work. Some learners do not live with their parents. It becomes a problem with parental support in reading at home.*

Teacher 4D said:

*This one is a real challenge. I do but learners' socio-economic context also affects the development of reading. Their context is affected by a high level of poverty and the majority of the population lives in rural areas where there is high level of unemployment. Reading becomes one of the activities that are not always prioritized by the community members because the most prioritized activities are those that would bring food home.*

The teachers' responses indicated they were unable to assist learners to read at home. They cited learners' home environment as one that did not encourage learners' extra reading. They indicated parents' illiteracy, limited time available, household and chores as factors that deprived them an opportunity to read. Parents focus mainly on meeting basic family needs and have little or no money to buy books. These findings corroborate those in DoAC (2006). There was also a perceived difference between the school and home environment especially in rural black communities. Schools, as mentioned by Soudien (cited in City Press, 09 July 2006) are seen as institutions of formality which contrast sharply with the informality of everyday culture as lived in people's homes. The curriculum advocates that reading should be one of the learners' priorities at school as well as at home, but in reality parents expect learners to perform duties related to their socio- economic activities at home as their priority. These differences deprive learners of opportunities to read at home. The findings in my case study

affirm those of other research discussed in Chapter 2 e.g. in Malawi (Williams, 2007); and KwaZulu Natal (FLP, 2006).

#### **4.6. Presentation and analysis of learner data about reading**

The learner interviews intended to find out about learners' reading habits. Learners were asked questions in order to check if they were exposed to any form of reading out of interest outside the classroom. It intended to find out if learners accessed any reading material while they were at home, and whether their parents give them any kind of support and assistance in reading.

##### **4.6.1 Access to reading material at home**

Learners were asked about accessibility of reading materials.

*What else do you read at home, other than prescribed text books that you get from school?*

Group A from school A said:

*We sometimes read newspapers, magazines, notices when we see them. But we do not read when we do not have anything to read. We only read when our parents or sisters bring newspapers or magazines from town for us.*

Group B from school B said:

*We read when there is something to read, but when there is nothing to read we don't.*

A follow up question was asked:

*What do you mean when you say, "When there is nothing you don't?"*

Group B further explained:

*We mean that we only read when our teachers have given us homework, and when our parents have brought us magazines from town.*

Group C said:

*We read text books when we have some home work to be done. We sometimes read magazines and some newspapers because they give knowledge.*

Group D further said:

*We read text books when we have home works to do. Sometimes we watch T.V and as we watch we also read some advertisements because these increase our vocabulary.*

The data indicates that in all the schools learners sometimes read text books, newspapers and magazines when they happen to have them. Although they considered it necessary to read other reading material beyond their prescribed text book, they indicated that they did not regularly access any resources at home. Reading of various texts other than their text books therefore was difficult. This supported the findings according to Wafawarowa (2000) cited in Pretorius and Mampuru (2007: 41) that "up to 95% of all books in Africa are education

books, compared with 35% in Europe”. The result is that reading for pleasure is not common for many children from the disadvantaged communities (p. 41). Williams (2007) found the same situation in Malawi.

Learners in these schools also believed that exposure to further reading increased their knowledge and develop further their vocabulary. They preferred reading newspapers, magazines, TV advertisement and notices, but not all of them could access such reading material, except the few whose parents were working. Their reading habits also contrasted negatively with the view of Marlise (2005: 355-382), who stipulated that learners’ FAL/ or L2 develops largely and rapidly on how often they can read lengthy texts in their new language inside and outside the classroom. According to Marlise: “Reading improves vocabulary knowledge, and vocabulary knowledge supports reading development” (p. 381). The same finding further supported Pretorius and Mampuru’s (2007) view that literacy experience in poor communities mainly occurs in the schooling context and even that does not generally provide a print rich environment (p.41).

#### **4.6. 2. Learners’ understanding of the importance of further reading**

Learners were asked:

*Why do you think further reading is necessary for you?’*

Group C from school C said:

*We read newspapers so that we can do our projects; sometimes we make cut outs from the magazines in order to make posters. We also get more knowledge from magazines, like when we are given a topic to debate on; we collect some more facts from the magazines or newspapers. For topics such as 'girls are cleverer than boys' we get more facts when we read from magazines.*

Group D from school D said:

*Other reading material like magazines and newspapers help us to know things that happen in other places. We get information.*

Group B from school B further said:

*Exercises like word puzzle also give us more knowledge on nouns, adjectives and adverbs.*

It is evident that the learners understand the importance of extensive reading as prescribed by authors like Desmond (2003); Williams (2007). Learners also indicated that they were aware that they learn through reading beyond text books.

However the respondents did not mention any other purpose of reading other than reading for learning. There is no evidence that they saw reading as pleasure, entertainment and amusement. This indicated that there was still a gap in learners' understanding of the various purposes of extensive reading.

Teachers are therefore still faced with a challenge of persuading learners to read regularly if they are to achieve the LO 3 i.e. reading and viewing, where learners will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts (DoE, 2002b: 84).

#### **4.6.3. Learners' perception of parental support**

I asked learners about the extent of parental support they got for reading.

*How does your parent/guardian support you to read at home?*

Group A said:

*Our parents only help us when we ask them. Sometimes we would bring activities like dramatizing a scene from the text book. Then they would insist that we were supposed to have done and finished them at school. But sometimes they would assist where they could.*

Then other learners from the same group, adding to the first learner's response said:

*Mna umama uhlala ethi ndibobuza kutitshala esikolweni, yena akakwazi ukundenzela umsebenzi wesikolo ekhaya.*

Translated as:

My mother usually refers me to the teacher at school, indicating that the teacher at school should assist me. She is unable to do school work for me at home.

A learner (boy) in Group B said:

*Nokuthi mam emakhaya asikwazi ukufunda kuba siyasebenza ngamaxesha amanintsi. Owam utata uhlala ethi umfundi ufunda eskolweni, ekhaya umfana ujonge impahla.*

Translated as:

Another reason madam is that, at home we are unable to read in most cases, because we have work to perform. My father usually reminds me that a learner is a learner at school, at home a boy has to look after cattle.

Group C said:

*They sometimes give us magazines when we are given home work that refers us to such readings, like narrating stories by means of posters, and then we would make cut out from the magazines.*

Another learner in the same group C (girl) further said:

*We sometimes read at home on our own, without the assistance of our parents. Sometimes we read a lot on Saturdays when we play fantasy school. We would be a group of six (6) or so and pretended to be at school. One of us would be a teacher while the rest would pretend to be learners. The one who is a teacher for the day would make us read, write, answer questions, and conduct discussions around any given theme. Wow! That is one of activities I enjoy so much.*

Learners' interview responses showed that only a minority (approximately 30%) of parents were able to support learners to read at home. Most of the parents were unable to support their learners to read and respond to their homework. They were unable to provide them with any sort of reading material for learners at home. school. This further supported the findings of DoAC (2006: 21) in Section 2.4.

The parental involvement in reading was minimal. Learners claimed that their parents did not see why they had to do the teachers' work at home; in their view it should have been done at school. They perceived learners at home as their children, not learners. They felt that their children should perform relevant chores that would in turn make them future men or women. This supported Pretorius and Mampuru (2007: 45) in their finding that many parents in "high-poverty areas have a low literacy level". They participate less in school programmes because they are not familiar with the school context. They find it difficult to talk to teachers about their children's progress at school (p. 45). This reflects the legacy of apartheid, which deprived black communities of an opportunity to participate in school activities.

However, further analysis showed that while a bigger percentage of learners at GET level did not get adequate support on reading from parents at home, there were some learners (about 30%) that did get encouragement and support in reading from their parents. They said that their parents encouraged them to read

continuously. They read for different purposes, like responding to teachers' home work, making collages through cut and paste, and making short summaries. According to Collins and Matthey (2001:66-67) parental support in developing and motivating reading programmes, is of extreme importance, and it validates the importance of FLP (2006) in encouraging parental literacy.

Group D raised another interesting point, i.e. peer support. Some learners appeared to be interested and motivated to read independently while they were not at school. This illustrated what Pettigrew and Akhurst (2000: 111) and Craft (2000: 66) see as self-directed learning and is an important part of the critical outcomes of NCS (DoE, 2002 b).

#### **4.7. Triangulation of findings from teacher and learner interviews**

I triangulated teacher and learner interview findings about:

- Learner reading habits at home
- Their access to reading materials
- Their awareness of the importance of further reading
- Parental support for reading

There was a general agreement in both sets of data that learners only read the work set by teachers at home i.e. in the textbook. They sometimes have access to newspapers and magazines but not on a regular basis. While both teachers and learners recognized that it was important to read widely to improve their

English language, and for studies, they were not able to do so because of the lack of reading materials. They also understood that wide and broader reading (extensive reading) advanced readers' knowledge. They referred to unavailability of reading material as the biggest challenge to developing their ability to read. Both groups give the impression that there is little reading for pleasure.

There was also agreement in both sets of data that parental support for learners' reading widely, if at all, at home, is minimal. Some parents do this but in general, parents are not able to help learners and expect them to do domestic work when they get home from school.

#### **4.8. Presentation and analysis of the data from classroom observations related to intensive and extensive reading programmes.**

Teachers' classroom practice was observed to triangulate the findings with the teacher interviews on their understandings or perceptions of teaching intensive and extensive reading. This relates to the main research questions.

Four teachers' classroom practice was observed in 16 lessons, with the use of the observation schedule. The schedule was developed in line with model NCS lesson plan (see Appendix F/2) looking into activities that need to be done in each language class (NCS, 2005b). Within the categories of reading material, activities, participation of learners and utilization of their experience, I was also looking for illustrations of the kinds of interactive principles advocated within the literature surveyed in Chapter 2 (e.g. Hedge, 2000; Wallace, 1992; Williams,

2007 etc). Their influence on my research instruments was discussed in more depth in Chap 3.

The following pattern indicates the areas that were covered by the schedule:

- Planning for intensive and extensive reading activities (DoE,2002b:84-85).
- Provision of reading material(DoE, 2002b)
- Activities that are used for intensive reading (Hedge,2000:205:Hill 1989:16; Mosala et al.2001:97).
- Activities that are used for extensive reading (Williams,2007; Hedge 2000:205; Carrell et al.1990).
- Continuous and democratic participation of learners in reading activities (Hill, 1989; Freire and Macedo, 1987:33, Wallace, 1992:25)
- Provision of further reading activities and follow up work to be done after school and at home(DoE,2002)
- Utilization of learners' experience as source of reference(Wallace,1992:45).
- Ways of making learners consult their parents or community members for further reading and information (DoE,2002).
- Assessment and constructive feedback given to learners on tasks they did (DoE, 2002)

The findings are presented according to these categories and are based on the Summary of Classroom Observation findings in Appendix H. Some illustrations of lessons were taken from the summary and are presented below. Illustrative classroom observation schedules for each school are presented in Appendix I.

#### **4.8.1. Planning for intensive and extensive reading lessons**

The findings confirm that teachers planned for lessons before they went to classrooms. They had their prepared lesson plans in place in day one of the week. The lessons were planned for a cycle of 5 days in all four schools. The teachers' plan reflected activities that would be done for day one (1) up to day five (5). English FAL Learning Outcomes (LO) and Assessment Standards (AS) for that particular lesson were well reflected in their planned lessons. Their lesson plans were in accordance to the expectations of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) as stipulated in NCS (DoE, 2002 a; DoE, 2005 b).

The observations showed that all the teachers planned according to the requirements of the NCS. They prepared for learners' reading activities, indicating the Learning Outcomes (LO) and Assessment Standards (AS) they intended to address. The lesson plans for Teacher 1A and Teacher 2B both responded to LO 3 and 6 based on a comprehension text in a textbook (see Appendix H). Activities such as reading, identification of uncommon words and language structure within the text were planned. These activities were based on

intensive reading outcomes. Carrell et al (1990: 3) refer to this type of reading as bottom-up reading which exposes learners to language structure.

Teacher 3C and Teacher 4D had different lesson plans from the first two teachers, but their pattern for preparation was similar in that it also identified the Los that they planned to achieve. These were LO 2, 3 and 6 and their clustered AS respectively. Both teachers had identified authentic texts, i.e. a pamphlet with a poem about superstition on it (Teacher 3C) and a newspaper text about relationships (Teacher 4D). In both lessons, learners would read silently and aloud, identify words they were not familiar with, interpret the meaning of the texts and make group presentations of their interpretations. Teacher 4D planned his activities in such a way that learners predicted the content of the text, summarized and interpreted texts, made group presentations and answered post reading questions about the topic and their real life experience of it. These activities covered extensive as well as some intensive reading. They gave learners an opportunity to refer to authentic texts, like newspapers and share ideas as groups. Teacher 4 D planned to refer learners to their parents and community members for further reading. Teacher 4D lesson plans indicated that the teacher had a clearer understanding of the new curriculum, although his plans did not include much focus on developing a love of reading within learners.

All of the teachers had included reading activities which could be analysed as both intensive and extensive depending on whether the questions focused on

language structure, or their opinions about the content of the texts. However, with the exception of Teacher 4 D, none of the teachers really planned lessons that took learners further and exposed them to a wider reading of various texts. This indicates that teachers made no clear distinction between intensive and extensive reading programme even in their planning.

The later analysis of the actual lesson also indicated that while teachers planned efficiently, they did not always implement their plans.

#### **4.8.2. Provision of reading material**

I observed the kind of materials that teachers were able to provide learners with, or whether indeed they were able to provide any materials at all.

There were text books in schools provided by the Department of Education to assist teachers and learners in their day to day teaching and learning activities (see Appendix H; Summary of findings, category 2). Text books contained relevant texts (e.g. drug abuse, HIV/Aids, social relationships), poems, activities on dialogues, simulations, comparisons of sets of pictures, to name but a few. Teacher 1A and Teacher 2B used textbooks for the observed lessons, and said they used them all the time. Teacher 4D did not use the textbook but referred learners to it as well as the pamphlet; he also confirmed that he did use the textbook regularly. Teacher 3C used pamphlets, dictionaries and learners' activity books as his reading resources; he also used the textbook. Therefore, there was

some provision of texts books for teachers and learners in schools for language learning. From my experience as a language teacher, this is a considerable improvement on the situation a decade ago. However there were no other reading material in schools; as indicated in Chapter 3, there were no libraries or class libraries, and the teachers did not use authentic materials, apart from Teachers 3C and 4D (see Appendix F/3 for the recommended list of authentic materials required by NCS). These contrast with Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) as well as most of the other authors in the language teaching survey (Hill, 1989; Hedge, 2000; Wallace, 1992) who recommended that in order for reading to be effective learners have to be exposed to a wide range of reading material.

It can be argued that the NCS recommended language text books do make provision for learners to read further than the text book. Activities such as dialogues and role plays, simulation, comparison of sets of pictures and noting of similarities and differences, poetry interpretation and poetry analyses, were available in the series of text books found in schools. They consistently referred learners to extra readings like newspapers, novels, articles and other books (Bernard and Bester 2006: 57). But teachers in this rural context were unable to refer learners to such reading materials because they were unavailable both in the school and community. The text books then turned to be the only source of reference.

A moving example of this lack of reading material was seen in lesson 4 taught by teacher 3C, where he wanted learners to explain more about the structure of a poem. He made an example of Mandela's autobiography; "Long walk to Freedom", as a title that reflected metaphor.

He remarked:

*This title compares Mandela's life to a long walk with many difficulties and obstacles on the way to achieve freedom*

I could see that learners wanted to see the book, but the teacher had no book to show them.

He further said to them (moving his shoulders up and opening his arms):

*Well, you know our situation. I have no way to refer you for further reading. I would show you the book if I had one.*

These lessons also indicated that teachers did not yet have strategies for providing extra reading facilities for learners. There was no attempt in these schools to establish reading corners and make a collection of books through donations from book sellers, publishers and some parents as recommended by Charters and Page( 2005: 47- 48); Kenyon et al. ( 2001: 28). When I probed teachers said they had no reading materials to offer, and that the parental homes also could not offer this support. Their training and experience did not seem to provide them with any motivation or guidance on how to access additional

materials i.e. to search beyond their immediate community. However, the effect of my visit on School D shows that it is possible to motivate teachers to develop class libraries. Although they had not yet obtained books, they had established shelving in each classroom; this showed the possibility of encouraging teachers to search for even basic classroom reading resources.

#### **4.8.3. Activities used for intensive and extensive reading**

This section is based on the observations of what actually took place in the classrooms rather than the planned lesson. It provides strong evidence that teachers focused solely on intensive reading as defined by Hedge (2000:205); Hill (1989:16) and others.

The activities below were typical of those used in intensive reading lessons:

- Reading of the text by both teachers and learners was observed in Teacher 1A's classroom in lesson 1, teacher 2B's and Teacher 3C's classrooms.
- Checking on the meaning of new words was carried out by Teacher 3C and 4D.
- Interpretation of the text in all lessons; the learners interpreted the meaning of the text; with the poetry, they interpreted figurative language;
- Analysis of the structure of the stories e.g. identification of the situation, problem, solution and outcome, was observed in Teacher 4D's lessons.
- Grammar activities like identification of adverb, adjectives within the text were observed in lesson 3 of Teachers 1A and 2B.

The following extract from lesson3 conducted by Teacher 2B illustrates the kind of reading lesson observed. The teacher asked the class to listen to a learner reading the text aloud and they had to underline all the verbs in the text.

Teacher: (referring to class) *which words did you identify as verbs?*

Teacher: *Luvo*

Luvo: *In the sentence "jeans have remained popular because they are strong..." "remained" is a verb.*

Teacher: *No. who can help?*

Mandisa: *"have remained" is a verb*

Teacher: *Good. Now let us change all those verbs in present tense to past tense.*

Most of the activities focused on familiarizing learners with the features of written language, language structure and understanding of grammar in language. Such activities were spread over a period of four days (four lessons). Learners participated actively in all the lessons. They participated in group work and individually, responding to the teachers' questions.

Extensive reading activities were not observed in actual lesson presentation even though they occasionally appeared in the lesson plans. Activities that intended to encourage learners' free voluntary reading, such as silent reading lessons where learners choose their readers and enjoy reading were not observed (Williams, 2007). Activities like project activities and gathering of further information by

learners as recommended by Pretorius and Mampuru (2007), Hedge (2000), Wallace (1992) were also not observed. According to Wallace (1992: 4) these activities form part of reading programmes that develop further learners' reading skills, motivate them to read broadly and enable them to read a range of texts in the language of teaching and learning and other languages.

On the contrary, the analysis of reading lessons indicated an emphasis on intensive reading activities. Learners were not given a chance to read more texts, comparing them and focusing on the meaning and interpretation of language rather than on the structures of language. As mentioned, learners were not referred to other reading facilities for further reading in any of schools, except in school D where teacher 4D encouraged learners to consult parents, community members and magazines for further readings in lesson 4.

The following is an example of one of the only lessons conducted by Teacher 4, which reflected extensive reading. It was based on a story taken from a newspaper and photocopied:

Teacher: (giving instructions to class)

*Now that you have read the story, sit according to the groups of 4 members in a group. Renarrate the story as groups and interpret it once more. When you think you understand it, use an A3 size paper and make a collage where you interpret the same story using pictures. You can either draw or make cut outs. As you put*

*on the picture or drawing, write a sentence or two underneath the picture to indicate your message. Do that as a group. I am giving only 30 minutes for the activity.*

The activity made learners move around, making cut outs from magazines. They even discussed pictures before they decided to use them for their activity. The activity referred learners to some extra reading material, such as magazine, and made them realize that they can interpret the pictures from another angle.

When analyzing the data above, I realised that some activities that are used in intensive reading programmes may also lead to the development of extensive reading. The difference would lie in the purpose and the outcomes to be achieved at the end of the lesson. For example if learners interpret a text as an activity in the classroom, the purpose may be to develop their ability to interpret written language in a specific short text (intensive reading). If learners are further referred to other readings and made to read and interpret various texts beyond the original, then the activity becomes an extensive reading activity.

When comparing the teachers' understanding of extensive reading, from the interview data with the actual implementation of their plans, from the classroom observation data, there is a discrepancy. Although teachers referred to extensive reading as reading for more knowledge, information, new ideas, pleasure and entertainment, in practice they did not demonstrate the development of reading

for all the purposes they mentioned. They did not encourage learners to look for other reading material and read broadly. This might be based on the fact that there were no reading materials that learners could refer to, or may be because teachers assumed (as they said in interview) that when learners are well equipped in intensive reading, then extensive reading would develop automatically.

These findings are important because they show that learners were not given sufficient opportunity to reading widely in the language of learning and teaching. They were not covering the critical outcomes and assessment standards of NCS (DoE, 2002 a) which require them to collect information from different resources, analyse and use it for their learning in other disciplines.

#### **4.8.4. Democratic participation of learners in reading activities**

Another category that was observed was whether learners participate democratically in reading activities. Learners are expected to play a major role in the development of their reading skills. If they willingly participate in their reading activities they are more likely to develop an interest in reading more texts.

What emerged from the data is that learners were able to participate in some kinds of reading activities. They read aloud and sometimes silently depending on the teachers' instructions. They read the prescribed available texts, as individuals, as groups and sometimes as the whole class. They answered

questions as required by the activities, and participated in discussions. Although they read the English texts, their discussions were conducted in Xhosa. Their participation reflected the potential for moving on to extensive reading to some extent, but there was no further reference to other reading materials, as recommended in the literature survey.

Learner participation was also always led by the teachers. They relied on the teachers to give direction, and in turn the teachers relied mostly on question and answer methods. The lesson extract from lesson 3, Teacher 2B, presented in section 4.8.3 of this chapter, is a typical example of how teachers led and controlled any discussion.

The observations indicated that learners were introduced to various activities through teachers asking questions and learners giving answers as individuals. Williams (2007: 63) refers to this pedagogic approach to reading as the language approach that is widely used by teachers in his study. This approach is termed 'safetalk' by Chick (cited in Williams, 2007: 63). In my study, most of the teachers led learner participation activities. Learners were not given an opportunity to develop independent learning that in turn would encourage them to look for more information on their own (Pettigrew and Akhurst, 2000: 111). The lesson presentations did not promote self developing reading skills among learners; instead they relied on teachers for information and more ideas (p. 112).

Learners still relied mainly on the teacher in the process of scaffolding their learning. Even though there were group participations, where learners discussed text related questions, the teacher would always take the lead. For example Teacher 1A conducted the group discussion in lesson 2. She had a set of questions based on the text and allocated them to learners to answer as groups referring to the text. Teacher 2B did the same in lesson 3. Teacher 3C conducted his lesson 3 on interpretation of the poem in the same way. The same approach was applied by Teacher 4D in lesson 2. There were no situations where learners were given topics and allowed an opportunity to research on given topics as groups and shared ideas in preparation for their presentations. Peer scaffolding (DoE, 2005 b: 12), where learners learn from each other was not observed, yet OBE approach requires learners to be given an opportunity to learn from their peers. According to the OBE approach, learning should be structured in such a way that learners learn in groups, share information and learn from each other (DoE, 2002 a: 13).

#### **4.8.5. Provision of out of class reading activities**

The classroom observations confirmed the findings from interviews that learners were not regularly referred to further reading facilities at home. Reference to reading at home was mainly to activities where learners had to read specific texts in order to respond to activities focusing on language work, or to introduce them to a text for the following day. Learners were not given activities that would

encourage them to consult further reading material other than their texts books, possibly for the reasons already discussed in the analysis of planning lessons.

One challenge for teachers is the difficulty of involving parents and community members in encouraging learners to read widely.

For example Teacher 4D in the following Grade 8 lesson (sample of lessons 3 and 4) referred learners to their parents for assistance in their homework:

*Teacher: Now that you could not finish your work within 30 minutes, take it home as homework, and ask your parents to assist you. You can even go to community members and ask for more magazines and newspapers.*

Next morning the teacher asked for the homework in order to check if the learners did the work. He discovered that more than half of the class did not do it.

*Teacher: It looks like many of you did not do the work, why?*

*Learner 1: We could not get the magazines.*

*Learner 2: there was nobody to assist me at home, my mother was at work.*

The teacher took them through the activity, using the activities of those learners who managed to do it.

I triangulated the classroom observation findings with the interviews of both teachers and learners and found that this experience is validated by all participants. There is a serious challenge for teachers and learners in getting parental support and resources at home to encourage extensive reading out of class.

#### **4.8.6. Assessment and feedback**

It was evident in the classes I visited that generally teachers gave learners feedback on the work they did. This was done through marking their activities and taking them through the activities they could not get right. For example teacher 3C in lesson 4 assisted learners to unpack the figures of speech that learners could not get correct in the given activity. They were done as a whole class activity.

Learners were further allowed an opportunity to evaluate themselves as groups, individuals and as a class. They would fill in evaluation forms and report about their performance before they were instructed to put them in their portfolios. The assessment criteria used focused on the achievement of LO6 and appeared successful. I was impressed with the way schools consistently assess learners and give them feedback. However, there was no evidence of project work observed in learners' portfolios, especially those related to reading activities. This would have indicated some extensive reading. Assessment was based mainly on intensive reading activities.

The analysis of the activities and the assessment within reading lessons shows strongly that not all of the Los are being focused on and assessed. In particular, LO 3 (Reading and Viewing) and LO 5 (thinking and reasoning) do not have the same emphasis as LO 6 (Language Structure and Use) (DoE, 2002 b). This illustrates the predominance of intensive reading lessons in this study; ones that exclude the important components of LO3 and LO5, which are linked to extensive reading.

#### **4.9. Summary of the Study's Findings**

This is based on my analysis and interpretation and includes triangulation of the interviews and classroom observations. It is also based on data related to the teachers' profiles (see section 4.2.1).

##### **4.9.1. Teachers' profile triangulated with interview and classroom observation data**

When I compared the four teachers' profiles, reading experience and approaches to teaching, I found some evidence to indicate a difference between Teachers 1A and 2B on the one hand, and Teachers 3C and 4D on the other.

Findings from the teachers' interviews indicated that teachers' experience of reading may have an influence on the way they teach and refer learner to other reading materials. For example teachers (1A and 2B), who never interacted with

books before their school years, referred learners less frequently to extra reading material.

While all the teachers seemed to understand the need for wider reading experience for learners, only the two younger teachers actually tried, in a difficult context, to put this into practice.

The impact of age, early reading experience and training on teachers would have to be validated by a more quantitative study.

#### **4.9.2. Availability of reading resources**

Teachers' and learners' interview responses, when triangulated with classroom practice indicated that the unavailability of extra reading material affects negatively the implementation of the LO s that focus on extensive reading. There is little evidence in the interviews or observations of learners reading more widely than the textbook. There is also no evidence in either sets of data of learners being given home support that encourages them to read, partly because parents do not have reading resources or the means to purchase them.

#### **4.9.3. The emphasis on intensive reading**

What was further indicated by triangulating the teachers' classroom practice and interviews was that learners at GET level senior phase are more exposed to intensive reading than extensive reading programmes. Observations of

classroom practice also reflected that there are language text books in schools that talk to the activities that are to be performed by learners in order to implement both intensive and extensive reading programmes, which would improve learners' general skills required for secondary learning (see Appendix H, category 2). The text books available in schools were not utilized fully to expose learners further to wider reading material; activities that are rich in potential for extending reading are omitted, possibly because teachers feel that learners will not find resources out of the classroom.

#### **4.9.4. Exposure to relevant and innovative teacher education for developing reading skills**

Both teachers' interviews and classroom observation indicated that teachers' pre- and in-service programmes were inadequate for empowering teachers to implement the NCS curriculum. Teachers indicated that they attended only one workshop that focused on new reading approaches at GET level. The inadequate training of teachers was also observed in classroom practice. Teachers made good lesson plans (Appendix H, category 1), but did not present their lessons according to the plans. There was a discrepancy between what the NCS curriculum expects from the teachers and what actually teachers do in the classroom. This refers both to the type of reading material and the type of teacher envisaged in NCS (DoE, 2002a).

#### **4.10. Conclusion**

In this chapter the findings of my research have been presented, analysed and interpreted, using also the literature survey, and the process of triangulation. They provide at least partial answers to the research questions that related to teachers' and learners reading experiences, teacher education and teacher perceptions of intensive and extensive reading in the language classroom.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study explored approaches to teaching reading skills in English at senior phase in Junior Secondary Schools in Mbizana district, Eastern Cape. The main research questions related to the topic were:

- What are teacher perceptions of reading approaches in senior phase?
- What is their practice in relation to extensive and intensive reading programmes?

In order to understand their perceptions and practice more fully, I also explored teachers' personal reading experience, learners' involvement in reading in and out of the classroom, and parental support.

#### 5.2. Summary of the Study

Chapter 1 presented the problems related to reading ability in the context of South Africa and especially rural learners. Although most of the research studies have focused on primary learners, the chapter highlighted the problem for learners using English as LoLT if they are struggling with reading.

The study showed, through the literature survey in Chapter 2, that the new LiEP is struggling to change the accepted policy of using English as LoLT from an early stage of primary school. However, the current context in Mbizana holds onto English, and thus it was important to see how teachers and learners were coping. The literature also surveyed the requirements of the new curriculum in regard to both learning outcomes and learner centred approaches for reading. These and the views of current South African and international authors provided a framework for analyzing data that was collected through qualitative methods described in Chapter 3.

The findings presented and analysed in Chapter 4 raise important questions related to the teaching and learning of reading in senior phase. This case study indicates that the problems related to reading ability may well be caused by challenges in the rural socio-economic context, as well as in the experience and training of teachers. The conclusions from these findings are presented below, together with recommendations for research and teacher education.

### **5.3. Conclusions arising from the findings of the study**

As this was a small scale case study, it is important to note that the conclusions that follow frequently raise the need for more research for further validation.

The conclusions arise largely from the main research questions about perceptions and practice of teachers, but also take into account the subsidiary questions where they are significant.

### **5.3.1. Conclusions related to teacher perceptions and practice of approaches to teaching reading in English FAL**

The most important conclusion arising from the findings of interviews and classroom observations is that although the teachers in this study seem to understand the distinction between intensive and extensive reading, they have perceptions of how to develop extensive reading that sometimes differ widely from authors such as Williams (2007); Hedge (2000); Wallace (1992). In their practice there is little or no evidence that they actually implement extensive reading, even when they include it in their planning.

This finding points to a number of important gaps. It indicates that senior phase learners are not getting sufficient grounding in reading a wide range of texts for a variety of purposes (Wallace,1992), nor are they getting the required experiences of reading critically and inquiring into further sources of knowledge (DoE,2002 b) as required by NCS Learning Outcomes 3 and 5. The study shows that the curriculum is not being fully implemented. This has important implications for learners' reading ability as they progress into further education in FET. It also suggests that learner reading problems at a primary level are not being dealt with at GET senior phase level in this rural context.

### **5.3.2. Conclusions related to teachers' personal life experience of reading**

The findings related to teachers' early and school experiences of reading, as well as their current personal reading habits lead to a number of observations that require further research.

Differences in the teachers' early pre-school experience of reading, lead to two tentative observations. First, those teachers who had some experience of reading with parents before school seemed to find it easier to enjoy reading when it was introduced at school which reinforces the findings from projects such as FLP (2006).

The findings about teachers' current reading habits lead to further conclusions that require corroboration. These findings indicate that teachers do not read on a regular basis, and they generally read only newspapers and magazines. This confirms the Project Bookworm findings (DoAC, 2006). An important related finding was that all teachers still felt inadequate about using libraries possibly because of their feelings in childhood that were caused by the apartheid system. All these findings lead to the conclusion, corroborated by the classroom observations, that teachers' own reading experience in this instance affects the way they refer to reading with their learners. It is difficult to motivate and convey a love of reading if you do not read widely yourself. They did not motivate learners to visit libraries, or to read more widely than newspapers or magazines.

### **5.3.3 Conclusions related to teacher education: pre- and in-service programmes**

These teachers do not appear to have been introduced to the major communicative and interactive approaches to reading in their pre-service teacher education programmes. The NCS requires these approaches (2005b) yet even in the in-service training for NCS the teachers only had one workshop on developing reading. The impact of these gaps in training was evident in the classroom observations where teachers used a predominantly teacher-controlled approach to intensive reading, and included few activities that would lead to open discussion and learner led debate.

This leads to the conclusion that teacher education at both stages is not preparing teachers adequately to develop learners reading skills. This is important in view of the studies that indicate serious reading problems in South African learners (e.g. PIRLS, 2007; DoE,2005 b; Mothibeli in Pretorius and Mampuru, 2007).

### **5.3.4. Conclusions related to the impact of the socio-economic background on the implementation of the English FAL curriculum**

This study was carried out in a rural context and findings linked with that context lead to a number of important conclusions about the challenges to teaching reading.

The most important conclusion is that all the schools lack adequate reading materials, other than a textbook; this makes it difficult, if not impossible, to implement the NCS English FAL curriculum fully. At least the LOs related to extensive and critical reading and inquiry can only be implemented with adequate reading resources, such as those listed in the NCS (DoE, 2002 b).

The situation is made more difficult by the lack of bookshops and libraries in the context. The one available library is far from these schools and is not fully utilized, and the bookshop mostly supplies stationery.

A further conclusion related to the socio-economic context is that teachers and learners cannot rely on full support from parents and community in developing a love of reading and competence in reading. The study found that some parents are reluctant or unable to support learners' reading at home. The reasons lie in the degree of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment in the district (HSRC, 2007). It is aggravated by parental views that learners should be involved in economic activities at home rather than reading (see similar findings in Project Bookworm, 2006). These challenges were also corroborated by learners in their discussions of the reading situation at home.

#### **5.4. Recommendations**

This study refers to the following recommendations as possible ways that could address some of the above mentioned challenges:

#### **5.4.1. Recommendations related to teacher education**

The main recommendation relates to departmental in-service, and ACE and NPDE programmes at university level. There is a clear need for greater exposure of teachers to innovative reading and teaching approaches like the communicative and interactive approaches in Hedge (2000), Wallace (1999) and Williams (2007). Teachers should be fully aware of the importance of extensive reading in the LoLT, and should be trained in how to develop extensive reading activities. They should also be introduced to the development of critical literacy as recommended by Janks, 1991 and Comber and Simpson (2001).

The in-service programmes should include raising awareness among teachers on developing their own reading resources, e.g. learner and teacher story books. Teachers should be taught how to write stories in their training programmes to encourage emerging authors. There should be training on developing classroom reading corners as a first step in developing basic school libraries (McDonough and Shaw, 1993). Teachers also need to become competent in the use of projects as a means of encouraging extensive reading.

#### **5.4.2. Recommendations related to improving the culture of reading in an impoverished socio-economic context**

There is no escaping the difficulty of developing a love of reading and an ability to read competently in an impoverished socio-economic background. However, the literature survey has provided useful suggestions about improving literacy in the

community (Williams, 2007; DoAC, 2006; Desmond, 2003). The recommendations below arise from these.

There is a need for Departmental district staff to conduct reading advocacy campaigns with community members and parents, to encourage them to play a role in encouraging learner reading. The Department should explore projects like FLP to see whether there is any funding available to utilize these ideas.

The NCS has a useful list of reading resources that should be used but these are not available in rural contexts like Mbizana. Despite the attempts made by the DoE, there are still inadequate supplies of reading resources required for NCS at senior phase. The DoE should urgently face this critical situation in discussions with school staff representatives and relevant NGO and business stakeholders.

There are community development programmes carried out by the municipalities. Community or mobile libraries should be budgeted for in these plans.

These suggestions however do not overlook the efforts that the Department of Education has already done to start addressing the problem. The national programme of “Drop all and read” announced by the national Minister of education, Naledi Pandor, compels learners and teachers in schools to have a session when they leave everything and read for 20 minutes. Also, programmes

like Readerthon provide learners with an opportunity to read and participate in reading and speaking competitions.

#### **5.4. 3. Recommendations for further research**

It is important that some of the findings in this study should be more fully investigated. Important issues for research are:

- The extent of parent and community involvement in the development of rural learners' reading skills (FLP, 2006; DoAC, 2006).
- The impact of teachers' personal reading experience on their approach to teaching reading;
- The impact of using English as the LoLT in rural senior phase classes (Pluddemann, Mbude-Shale and Wababa, 2005).

#### **5.5. Conclusion to the study**

The study has exposed me to the value of the research processes I chose and the usefulness of the case study I conducted. It exposed me to some of the difficulties experienced by teachers in the process of implementing the new curriculum in poor rural communities. The case study has shown that teachers of English FAL in these areas are in need of support in order to make reading successful. This was proved by the fact that when I visited School D after three weeks of the research I found that there was a change. The Principal was keen to show me that he had started the development of classroom reading corners.

Each classroom had some books and newspapers arranged on benches for easy access by learners.

I did face some challenges that caused me to battle with the expectations of the study, but the rich literature surveyed provided direction for further development of learners' reading skills.

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# **APPENDIX A**

## **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FROM PRINCIPALS**

MBIZANA DISTRICT OFFICE  
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
MBIZANA  
4800

09 JANUARY 2007

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Dear Sir /Madam

Request for permission to conduct research at your school

I hereby write to request for permission to conduct research at your school. The purpose of conducting the research is to fulfill the requirements of the M Ed (English as First Additional Language), full thesis with the University of Fort Hare.

The research questions are:

- What is the teachers' personal reading experience in the past and present?
- What are their perceptions of reading approaches, in senior phase at GET?
- What is their practice in relation to intensive and extensive reading programmes?
- To what extent do learners participate in both intensive and extensive reading?
- What role do learners' parents and home environment play in supporting them in reading programmes?

The above named research will be conducted in 4 schools. I will require one (1) English teacher for senior phase in each school, who will participate in this research, and four (4) learners per school. Teachers will be observed in classroom presentation for four (4) days and be interviewed for a day. Learners will be interviewed for 2 days. The interviews for both teachers and learners will be conducted during teachers and learners free time in order not to interrupt lessons.

I will adhere to the ethical principles by ensuring that the names of the schools, teachers and learners remain anonymous. The participants will be availed with interview scripts to verify the validity of their responses to the questions administered.

Thanking you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours Truly

A.N Masilo (Nee Seshea)

## **APPENDIX B**

### **DATA COLLECTION -TIME TABLE**

## DATA COLLECTION TIME TABLE

SCHOOL	DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY	GRADE
A	08/ 10/ 07	10:00	Lesson observation	8
	09/ 10/ 07	10:00	Lesson observation	
	10/ 10/ 07	10:00	Lesson observation	
	11/ 10/ 07	10:00	Lesson observation	
		13:00	Learners' interview	
	12/ 10/ 07	10:30	Learners' interview	
13:30		Teacher's interview		

SCHOOL	DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY	GRADE
B	15/ 10/ 07	09:30	Lesson observation	8
	16/ 10/ 07	09:30	Lesson observation	
	17/ 10/ 07	09:30	Lesson observation	
	18/ 10/ 07	09:30	Lesson observation	
		13:00	Learners' interview	
	19/ 10/ 07	10:30	Learners' interview	
13:30		Teacher's interview		

<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
<b>C</b>	22/ 10/ 07	10:00	Lesson observation	<b>9</b>
	23/ 10/ 07	10:00	Lesson observation	
	24/ 10/ 07	10:00	Lesson observation	
	25/ 10/ 07	10:00	Lesson observation	
		13:00	Learners' interview	
	26/ 10/ 07	10:30	Learners' interview	
13:30		Teacher's interview		

<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
<b>D</b>	05/ 11/ 07	10:00	Lesson observation	<b>8</b>
	06/ 11/ 07	10:00	Lesson observation	
	07/ 11/ 07	10:00	Lesson observation	
	08/ 11/ 07	10:00	Lesson observation	
		13:00	Learners' interview	
	09/ 11/ 07	10:30	Learners' interview	
13:30		Teacher's interview		

# **APPENDIX C**

## **DATA COLLECTION TOOL CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

### 1. Classroom observation schedule

The schedule is designed on the use of the scale that indicates relative emphasis on:

Strongly evident -1

Evident- 2

Seldom evident – 3

Not evident at all -4

To make it more comprehensive, comments are made to explain further my understanding on observation.

EXTENSIVE AND INTENSIVE READING ACTIVITIES	1,2,3,4	COMMENTS
1. Does the teacher plan for extensive and intensive reading activities that will be done in the classroom?		
2. Is there any provision of reading material that is done by the teacher at school?		
3. What kind of reading material is provided?		
4. What activities are used for intensive and extensive reading lessons? (e.g. skim and scan, pre- reading discussions, pre- questions, story telling, interviews and reading through the passage).		

5. Is extensive reading used continuously to develop the reading skills in English as FAL? (e.g. skim and scan, prediction, reflection and analyze)		
6. Is there any continuous democratic participation of learners in reading activities? (e.g. group discussion, debates or dramatization)		
7. Does the teacher consider and utilize learners' own experience as a fundamental and valuable resource of intensive and extensive reading?		
8. Does the teacher design and provide learners with further activities and follow-up work to be done in class and after school or at home?		
9. Are there any evidence tasks that are done during and after learning activities?		
10. Is there any way that learners are made to consult their parents or community members for further reading and information?		
11. Does the teacher give frequent and constructive feedback on tasks done by learners?		

# **APPENDIX D**

## **DATA COLLECTION TOOL**

### **TEACHERS' INTERVIEW**

**Semi- structured interviews for teachers**

**1.Pre- school reading:**

(a) Is there any form of reading that you were exposed to, at home in your childhood?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(b) Can you explain when you first learnt how to read and what was your parents' or guardian's support towards your reading?

.....  
.....  
.....

(c) What kind of reading material were you exposed to when you were young?

.....  
.....

(d) Which language/ languages did you enjoy reading most?

.....

(e) If you could not access any reading material then, then how did you learn to read?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(f) What type of reading material did you enjoy reading?

.....  
.....

**2. Reading habits in school years**

(a) Did you do any reading when you were at primary or secondary level?

.....  
.....  
.....

(b) If yes, what types of reading material did you enjoy most?

.....  
.....

(c) If no, what were the reasons?

.....  
.....

(d) Which language did you enjoy reading most?

.....  
.....

(e) Did you have an access to any library?

.....  
.....

(f) If yes, how frequently did you visit it?

.....  
.....

(g) If no, how did you find any reading material?

.....  
.....

**3. Developing teaching skills in reading**

(a) When you were a teacher trainee, what strategies and approaches were you exposed to, for developing reading for pleasure in learners?

.....  
.....

**4. Teaching experience**

(a) How long have you been teaching English as First Additional Language?

.....  
.....

(b) What do you understand by intensive and extensive reading?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(c) Do you ever include extensive reading in your language teaching and learning activities?

.....

(d) If yes how?

.....  
.....  
.....

e) If no why?

.....  
.....

(f) What activities have you used in teaching and learning English FAL, which encourage extensive reading in learners?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(g) Which activities do you think have developed your learners' ability to read?

.....  
.....  
.....

(h) What type of reading material do your learners read most, for pleasure or more information? For example, story books, magazines, newspaper, drama books or poetry books

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(i) Where do they get the reading material?

.....  
.....

(j) How do you assist them to access the reading material?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**5. Teacher training programmes**

(a) How many in service teacher training programmes did you attend last year 2006?

.....  
.....

(b) How many of these focused on extensive reading at GET level?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(c) How much have these in service teacher training programmes assisted you to develop further your teaching strategies for both intensive and extensive reading?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**6. Teacher perceptions of extensive reading at GET level**

(a) Do you think extensive reading is necessary for learners at GET level?

.....  
.....

(b) If yes, why?

.....  
.....

(c) If no, why not?

.....  
.....

(d) At what grade/ level do you think learners should be exposed to extensive reading?

.....  
.....

(e) Why?

.....  
.....  
.....

(f) What type of in school reading would you recommend for learners at GET level?

.....  
.....  
.....

(g) Why?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(h) Which ones do you think would be good for out of school reading?

.....  
.....

(i) Why?

.....  
.....  
.....

(j) How often do you have extensive reading as opposed to intensive reading?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(k)What problems do you think normally affect the development of both intensive and extensive reading in learners? For example, availability of reading material, learners' attitude, or parents' expectations from learners after school hours.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(l) How do you overcome them?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

# **APPENDIX E**

## **DATA COLLECTION TOOL**

### **LEARNERS' INTERVIEW**

**Semi- structured interviews for learners**

**1. Exposure to reading**

(a) Do you feel it necessary to read anything else other than your text books?

.....  
.....

(b) If yes, why?

.....  
.....

(b) If no, why not?

.....  
.....

(d)What else do you read?

.....  
.....

(e) In what language do you enjoy reading?

.....  
.....

(f) Where do you get the books to read, other than those prescribed at school?

.....  
.....  
.....

(g) Have you ever visited the library?

.....  
.....

(h) If yes, what did you find?

.....  
.....  
.....

(i) If no, why not?

.....  
.....  
.....

**2. Parents' or guardian' support**

(a) Do you read after school or at home? If no, why don't you read?

.....  
.....

(b) If yes, what material do you read?

.....  
.....

(c) Do your parents, guardians or family members assist you to get reading material?

.....  
.....

(d) If yes, how?

.....  
.....

(e) If no, how do you get material to read?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(f) Other than assisting you to get reading material, is there any way that your parents, guardians or family members assist you in your reading?

.....  
.....

(g) Do you ever enjoy reading?

.....  
.....

(h) If yes, why?

.....  
.....

(i) If no, why not?

.....  
.....

## **APPENDIX F**

- 1.NCS LEARNING OUTCOMES**
- 2. MODEL NCS LESSON PLAN**
- 3. NCS LIST OF RECOMMENDED  
READING TEXTS**

# **APPENDIX G**

## **TRANSCRIPTS**

**(Illustrative)**

**Schools A and D**

**Teachers and Learners**

## TEACHER 1A'S INTERVIEW

Interviewer: *We arranged that on this day we shall have an interview as our final session.*

Teacher 1A: Yes Madam

Interviewer: *I would like you to think about yourself when you were still young. How you learnt to read, at what age were you at the time, and all what assisted you to learn to read at that time.*

Teacher 1A: (mhh) I wonder if I can still remember that well. Remember that I am already 60 years old, but I shall try because that was my memorable times.

Interviewer: *Is there any form of reading that you were exposed to, at home in your childhood?*

Teacher 1A: (mhm) I don't even know where to start. Firstly, I was born in 1948, in the small farm in Flagstaff. My parents were well to do people, with some cattle and sheep. Yes, we never bothered to buy meat and milk at that time. We stayed together as one big extended family, with my grand mother, cousins, sisters and brothers. Because my parents were not learned, they never bothered themselves about school and reading. What came first to them were their livestock and working in the fields. It was really hard in those days. Both my mother and my father could not read, and therefore did not bother to teach us to read. We used to spend most of the day with our mother in the fields where she would be working. In the evening we would sit around the fire and everybody would be reporting about the experiences over the day. As I said we were a big family, my grand mother would narrate stories in the evening. Most of her stories were folk tales and I enjoyed them so much, especially those that involved animals that could speak and behave like human beings. I can still remember the story of a lion and

wolf. (mhm) I liked that one. That means I was never exposed to reading before I went to school.

Interviewer: *But can you explain when you first learnt how to read?*

Teacher 1A: (mhm) I actually learnt to read when I was actually at school. Remember at that time I was already 8 years old. But in those days there was nothing wrong with it.

Interviewer: *What kind of reading material were you exposed to at that time?*

Teacher 1A : (Yha), I remember that very well. During my first year at school, I was very shy and yet I was already old. I was never comfortable to read in the class. I would always be the last one to read in class, sometimes when the teacher points at me to do so. It actually took me a long time to realize the type of reading material I enjoyed, but I enjoyed listening to stories. It was only towards the end of the year when I begin to realize that I like reading those Xhosa short stories. (Yes) I think these were reminding about my granny who was no more there at that time.

Interviewer: *and then where did you get the books to read?*

Teacher 1A: our class teacher at that time, Mrs M, would always get us something to read. She taught us with very few, old books, but she would always make a plan that at least those children who battled with reading, like myself, get something to read. At times she would write some few sentences to read as home work. She would give an instruction that when we come back to school the next day, we should know them by heart.

Interviewer: *Did you have an access to any library?*

Teacher 1A: (oh) hayi ke mam, not in our days. I never knew of any even the library was just foreign to me it was not even in my vocabulary

Interviewer: *Then how did you find any reading material other than the one provided by your teacher?*

Teacher 1A: I could not get any, actually reading was not something we could even think of when we were at

home it was something we do at school and it would end there it was a matter of doing what the teacher has instructed and nothing there after

Interviewer: *When you were a teacher trainee, what strategies and approaches were you exposed to, for developing reading for pleasure in learners?*

Teacher 1A: (wow) when I passed STD 6 at that time I went to Mfundisweni training college to do my teachers course that time it was very rare for children from our area to remain in school until they passed standard 6. in fact school was not a priority in many families. Then at Mfundisweni I did my higher primary teachers course (mhm) that time we did all subjects there was no specialization. In languages we were exposed to a number of teaching methods we were trained on strategies on summarizing books, organizing debates, dramatization and language structure

Interviewer: *But which methods do you mean?*

Teacher 1A: (ok) I mean methods like telling methods question and answer methods and discussion method.

Interviewer: *(Yha) then you started teaching. By the way when did you start teaching?*

Teacher 1A: 1969 and since then I have been teaching English and Xhosa in various classes in different schools.

Interviewer: *(oh) good it means you a language specialist. Then as a teacher now have you attended any in service training programme that focused mainly in the implementation of intensive and extensive reading activities particularly now that we are implementing NCS?*

Teacher 1A: (mhm) there are so many workshops that we attend in particular now that there is this NCS but all of them focuses mainly on the strategies that needs to be used in classroom in order to assist learners to speak, read and write. In language workshops you will find that much attention is given to “the how” do we go about planning using the three levels of planning according to NCS policy. I only remember one

workshop I attended at Mbizana that focused on the development of reading skills at GET level

Interviewer: *(ok) but can you tell me what do you understand by intensive and extensive reading?*

Teacher 1A: (mhm) there is no clear distinction between the two words but according to my understanding intensive reading is the reading that the teacher and learners do in the classroom. They look mainly into the development of learners' language structure and on the other hand extensive reading I can say is the reading that learners do on their own without the supervision of the teacher especially when they are on their own maybe at home.

Interviewer: *(mhm) but tell me, do you include extensive reading in your language teaching and learning activities?*

Teacher 1A: (oh) hayi mam kaloku abantwanaxa sebefundile ukufunda eclasini baye bayozifundela bodwa emakhaya.

Interviewer: *Tell me how often do you read as a teacher?*

Teacher 1A: (mhm) not really often. You know what I rarely go to town. I normally buy myself a magazine to read when I happened to have gone to town. Then I usually go to town on month end, otherwise in the middle of the month I don't usually buy any magazine.

Interviewer: *Tell me, at what grade/ level do you think learners should be exposed to extensive reading?*

Teacher 1A: I think they should be exposed to reading at an early age (eh...) maybe Grade R (yes) in grade R. this will get them used to various reading texts at the beginning of GET.

Interviewer: *How do you assist learners to access reading facilities to improve their reading skills inside and outside classroom?*

Teacher 1A: That is real problem Our schools have no reading facilities like electricity and this makes it very difficult

to assist learners to get some extra reading material If they cannot get any thing to read at home then that's it they only read here at school (yah) then text books remain our main source of reading material We solemnly give them some activities that have comprehension to help to read.

Interviewer: *Which activities do you think have developed your learners' ability to read?*

Teacher 1A: activities like comprehensions passage are particularly good for teaching learners to read. Also reading of stories, drama and poetries are of great assistance.

Interviewer: *What type of reading material do your learners read most, for pleasure or more information? For example, story books, magazines, newspaper, drama books or poetry books*

Teacher 1A: (mhm) there is actually no material I can say my learners enjoy reading most they read what we have at that time, (yes) maybe story books, but generally you know our learners, they just don't show interest in reading.

Interviewer: *How do you assist them to access the reading material?*

Teacher 1A: (yah) this one is a challenge but we give them anything that is available, newspapers, magazines and some story books although this is not an easy thing because we cannot easily access them too, unless one happens to go to town.

Interviewer: *Do you ever assist your learners then to read at home, If so how?*

Teacher 1A: (mhm) I can say partially yes as I indicated that lack of books is our most challenge. But on top of that our learners' home environment does not encourage reading. Our learners in this area are brought up in an environment that does not encourage reading. They are expected to assist their parents at home on their day to day chores, and then at the end they do not get time to read.

- Interviewer: *What problems do you think normally affect the development of both intensive and extensive reading in learners? For example, availability of reading material, learners' attitude, or parents' expectations from learners after school hours.*
- Teacher 1A: (mhm) mainly the availability of reading material is a problem. There are no books for learners to read while they are out of class the reading they actually have are these text books as I mentioned earlier on. (yes) Even at home they do not get a chance to read because their parents expect them to help when they get home.
- Interviewer: *How do you overcome them?*
- Teacher 1A: I motivate them; give them activities to do at home as home works. Sometimes I refer them to their parents for assistance but that one does not really work because they always complain that their parents had no time, or they could not get anything to read at home. We are unable to even refer to the library in town because it is far.
- Interviewer: *Thank you very much Mama, can you organize me your learners now*

### **SCHOOL A : LEARNERS' INTERVIEW**

- Interviewer: *Good afternoon learners, take you seats just here next to me. We shall have a brief interview about you reading patterns. Be free to answer all questions, using what ever language that makes you feel free. Our conversation will be recorded for this quality assurance of this study.*
- Learner: Yes Mam
- Interviewer: *(ok) do you feel it necessary to read at home anything else other than the text books you read at school?*

Learner: Yes

Interviewer: *Good but why?*

Learner: We read in order to get knowledge we read newspapers and magazines. (another learner) We also read notices. (another learner) but we only read when we have them we do not read when there is nothing to read.(another learner) we only read when our parent and sisters have brought newspapers and magazines from town, but they do not go to town every day. My mother goes to town on month end only.

Interviewer: *(mhm) In what language do you enjoy reading?*

Learner: I like reading Xhosa newspaper because my mother buys it. It is easy to understand IsiXhosa but English is difficult. (another learner) but me I read in English because my sister always buys English bona, but (yho) It is difficult because some words I don't understand.

Interviewer: *How do your parents or guardian support you to read at home?*

Learner: My mother only helps me when I ask her to (another learner) Yes mine too. (another learner) My mother sometimes tells me to do my activities at school where I shall ask the teacher to assist me. She says she is busy at home she has no time for books. (another learner) but my sister always help me to do my home works

Interviewer: *Have you ever visited the library?*

Learners: No

Learner : I have seen the library in Mbizana town but I never got inside

Interviewer: *Why?*

Learner: It is not easy because the library is far in town (another learner) Nobody has ever referred us there. (another learner) I think only the high school students do go there.

Interviewer: *Do you ever read after school or at home?*

Learners: Yes but not every day (one learner) We read when we have homework to do (one learner) but me I don't have time , when I get home I have to collect sheep from the veld and when I come back its already late. Sometimes We read when we have magazines or newspapers.

Interviewer: *what material do you read?*

Learners: Newspapers and magazines sometimes

Interviewer: *Do your parents, guardians or family members assist you to get reading material?*

Learners: Sometimes. (one learner) My mother tells me that she does not afford to buy me books because she buys food (another learner) My mother usually promise to buy me a magazine when she goes to town when I ask for cuts out but she never brought me one. She always says she has forgotten. My brother sometimes brings me a magazine when I asked for it.

Interviewer: *Other than assisting you to get reading material, is there any way that your parents, guardians or family members assist you in your reading?*

Learner: Yes they give us money when there is money needed at school (another learner) They help us with home work when we have one

Interviewer: *Thanks so much. I enjoyed talking to you*

## INTERVIEW WITH TEACHER 4D

- Interviewer: *(Yes sir) as per our arrangement we shall have an interview on reading habits in order to finalize our session.*
- Teacher 4D: Yes Madam
- Interviewer: *I would like you to think about yourself when you were still young. How you learnt to read, at what age were you at the time, and all what assisted you to learn to read at that time.*
- Teacher 4D: (ok) first of all I can say I was fortunate enough to come from a family where reading was part of the family's norms. My father was a teacher and my mother was working at municipality as a clerk. My father usually bought himself a Xhosa newspaper, 'Inkqubela' and brought it home. He did that almost everyday when he had gone to town to fetch my mother. He would read his paper after we had had our dinner. I used to sit by his side as he read and asked him questions. Sometimes he would be fed up with me and my questions, but responded. As he dropped one paper on the floor, I would pick it up and asked him questions like, now daddy why is this person crying? His response would be, "son, the man is faced with a charge for criminal offences, and you know what, crime does not pay. When you live on stealing, you end up crying like that man. You must learn to work hard and never live on stolen goods". As he left his papers, I would then try to read in order not to steal like the man. By the time I went to school, I already could associate the picture of a man on the paper with word 'Indoda'.
- Interviewer: *But can you explain when you first learnt how to read?*
- Teacher 4D: I learnt to read at an early age, I think I was 3 to 4 years, I can't remember very well. I liked imitating my father and always pretend to be reading. I even wished that when I am grown up I should be like my father and read newspapers.

- Interviewer: *What kind of reading material were you exposed to when you got to school?*
- Teacher 4D: I enjoyed reading stories during my first years at school, maybe because I was already familiar to Xhosa books and newspapers. The language that was spoken at school did not differ much from the language I heard from my father at home (yes) I enjoyed reading so much. I even used to jump first when the teacher wanted a person to read for the class. The books that I enjoyed reading most were the story books written in IsiXhosa. I still remember the story I enjoyed most, the story of 'Mpukwana' I also loved reading poetries and try to compose mine especially when I was in grade 5.
- Interviewer: *Then how did you find any reading material other than the ones provided by your teacher at school?*
- Teacher 4D: (yes) my teacher used to give us books to read at home but sometimes those books would not be enough and not all of us would get them. But fortunately for me I would get some books at home which my father used for various purposes as a teacher. Actually my father had his small reading room.
- Interviewer: *Did you have an access to any library?*
- Teacher 4D: (oh) no I never visited any library. Even my father never said anything about visiting library. I never associated library with black people. To me it was a place prepared for white people only.
- Interviewer: *When you were a teacher trainee, what strategies and approaches were you exposed to, for developing reading for pleasure in learners?*
- Teacher 4D: (Yes) After my matric I went to Cicira Training College to do my teachers' course. English language was one of courses I did as my major subjects. I actually specialized with History and languages. In languages we were exposed to various teaching methods like narrative and story telling, reading, interpretation and summarizing of texts,

dramatization and debates. We also learnt to skim and scan through the text and make predictions

Interviewer: *(Ok) then you started teaching. By the way when did you start teaching?*

Teacher 4D: I started teaching in 1997 and since then I taught various subjects in different classes and English was one of the subjects I taught since then.

Interviewer: *(oh) good. Then as a teacher now have you ever attended any in service training programme that focused mainly in the implementation of intensive and extensive reading activities particularly now that we are implementing NCS?*

Teacher 4D; I attended about four language teaching workshops, but I can remember only one workshop that looked specifically into the development of reading skills, especially at GET level. Reading strategies like pre-reading discussions, pre-reading questions, predictions, dramatization and debates, top-down, bottom-up and projects reading strategies were highlighted as reading strategies that can be used to develop learners' reading skills. Mostly, reading workshops are conducted for foundation phase teachers. That one was conducted by the curriculum personnel in preparation for Readerthon competitions in August 2007.

Interviewer: *but what language approaches did you learn?*

Teacher 4D: Those NCS workshops that we attended exposed us to some language teaching approaches like communicative approach where learners could be encouraged to read the text mainly for communicative purposes. They could skim and scan through the text and find meaning.

Interviewer: *(ok) but can you tell me what do you understand by intensive and extensive reading?*

Teacher 4D: *(yes) but there is no clear distinction between intensive and extensive reading. While intensive reading looks into the development of learners' understanding of language structure, extensive*

reading develops learners' love of reading. It enables learners to read on their own, without responding to any classroom task like home work.

Interviewer: *(mhm) but tell me, do you include extensive reading in your language teaching and learning activities?*

Teacher 4D: (oh) Yes I do. Activities that I use in the classroom for language learning develop learners' reading skills that mean both intensive and extensive reading programmes are attended. For example when learners are given a text to interact with the importance of biodiversity in a language classroom lesson, the end results are that those learners are exposed to life species. The language lesson may encourage learners to read more about units of species such as mammals, amphibians, flowers, plants etc. In that way intensive reading developed learners' interest to read broadly i.e. extensive reading. They are able to collect more information on their own, analyze and add it to their notes.

Interviewer: *Tell me how often do you read as a teacher?*

Teacher 4D: (yes) I seldom read. I usually buy a newspaper to read, actually have a glance through when there is something interested I missed on TV news, like now there is a hot debate around the ANC leadership, then if I missed news due to whatever commitment, then I'd buy one the next day to read. I also buy myself a newspaper when I want to look for advertisements. Otherwise, I do not read regularly.

Interviewer: *Tell me, at what grade/ level do you think learners should be exposed to extensive reading?*

Teacher 4D: (ok) I believe that if reading could be made part of learners' life, things could turn around. If children could be provided with reading material even before they go to school that would mean that they grow up having a positive attitude towards books and other related reading material. By the time they go to school they are used to books, libraries, pictures and cartoons. They are able to cut and paste to create stories.

- Interviewer: *How do you assist learners to access reading facilities to improve their reading skills inside and outside classroom?*
- Teacher 4D: Yes I try but this one is a real challenge. I do but learners' socio-economic context also affects the development of reading. Their context is affected by a high level of poverty and the majority of the population lives in rural areas where there is high level of unemployment. Reading becomes one of the activities that are not always prioritized by the community members because the most prioritized activities are those that would bring food home.
- Interviewer: *Which activities do you think have developed your learners' ability to read?*
- Teacher 4D: Activities like debate, pre reading questions, prediction of the texts, poetry reading, comprehension passage, and reading of short stories assist learners' development of reading skills so much. Our learners also enjoy dramatization and learn through it.
- Interviewer: *What type of reading material do your learners read most, for pleasure or more information? For example, story books, magazines, newspaper, drama books or poetry books*
- Teacher 4D: (mhm) its not easy to say actually because our schools have no variety of reading material, so it becomes difficult to actually say, this is what they like most In any way they love reading short stories, (yes) there are some who would always go for poetry reading but most like novel reading and short stories
- Interviewer: *How do you assist them to access the reading material?*
- Teacher 4D: (mhm) I normally bring them some old books from home, sometimes I bring newspapers that I finished reading, some magazines that I collect from friends and that's it. But it is not an easy exercise because they are many and have to share very few copies.

Interviewer: *What problems do you think normally affect the development of both intensive and extensive reading in learners? For example, availability of reading material, learners' attitude, or parents' expectations from learners after school hours.*

Teacher 4D: (oh yes) the availability of reading material is the main challenge. There are no books for learners to read for pleasure other than the text books but it is much better because we are able to provide them with text books to read. (yes) there is a gap when it comes to assisting learners to read a variety of readings while they are out of classrooms.

Interviewer: *How do you overcome them?*

Teacher 4D: We encourage and motivate them by giving them activities to do at home as home works. Sometimes we refer them to their parents for assistance but that one does not really work because they always complain that their parents had no time, or they could not get anything to read at home. We also refer them to newspapers and magazines although this one again does not always work because many of them are unable to access some.

Interviewer: *Thank you very much sir, can you organize me you learners now.*

### **SCHOOL D LEARNERS' INTERVIEW**

Interviewer: *Good afternoon learners, take your seats just here next to me. We shall have a brief interview about you reading patterns. Be free to answer all questions, using what ever language that makes you feel free. Our conversation will be recorded for the quality assurance of this study.*

Learner: Yes Mam

Interviewer: *(ok) do you feel it necessary to read at home anything else other than the text books you read at school?*

Learner: Yes Mam

- Interviewer: *Good but why?*
- Learner: We read text books when we have home works to do. (one learner) but when there is nothing to read we do not read.(another learner) We also read newspapers so that we can do our projects; sometimes we make cut outs from the magazines in order to make posters. (another learner) We also get more knowledge from magazines, like when we are given a topic to debate on; we collect some more facts from the magazines or newspapers. Sometimes we watch T.V.and as we watch we also read some advertisements because these increase our vocabulary.
- Interviewer: *(mhm) In what language do you enjoy reading?*
- Learners: We read in English. (another learner) but sometimes we read in Xhosa especially because when we read in Xhosa we don't need our dictionaries. (another learner) It is easy to understand IsiXhosa but English newspapers has information about other countries; from it we get more information.
- Interviewer: *How do your parents or guardian support you to read at home?*
- Learner: Our parents help us when we have home works to do (another learner) Yes mine too. (another learner) Sometimes it is not easy to read at home because we are busy at home when we come back from school.(another learner) my mother sometimes tells me to do my activities at school where I shall ask the teacher to assist me. She says she is busy at home she has no time for books. But we normally meet and do our home works alone.
- Interviewer: *(mhm) that's good, but tell me have you ever visited the library?*
- Learners: We have been in the library in Mbizana but we never read any thing. We just went there to see it.
- Interviewer: *Do you ever read after school or at home?*

Learners: Yes but not every day (one learner) we read when we have homework to do but we don't have time, when we get home we have to help our parents.

Interviewer: *what material do you read?*

Learners: We read newspapers and magazines and any book that we have.

Interviewer: *Do your parents, guardians or family members assist you to get reading material?*

Learners: Sometimes they do but sometimes they don't. (one learner) My mother usually brings us some magazine when she comes back from town but her magazines are boring because they are all about cooking.

Interviewer: *Other than assisting you to get reading material, is there any way that your parents, guardians or family members assist you in your reading?*

Learner: Yes. They help us when we have some home works to do.

Interviewer: *Thanks so much. I enjoyed talking to you*

# **APPENDIX H**

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM:**

**OBSERVED LESSONS**

**SCHOOLS A-D**

SCHOOL: A

TEACHER: 1

CATEGORIES FOR OBSERVATION	LESSON 1	LESSON 2	LESSON 3	LESSON 4
	<b>Comprehension passage-reading</b>	<b>Discussions and interpretation</b>	<b>Grammar activities</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
1. Planning for reading lessons	Lesson was well planned This was in accordance to the NCS requirements. (DoE 2005)	Continuation of day 1 lesson plan. Questions were asked to reflect on day one's work. This was coupled with discussions.	Pronouns were identified and classified in the lesson plan	Planned according to NCS requirements ( see Appendix F2)
2. Provision of reading material	Text books- A text on weather focus.( Macmillan 2005)	Same text books- Text on weather focus	Text books and learners' activity books where learners wrote their input	Same text with relevant activities; learners' activity books.
3. Activities used for intensive reading	Teacher read aloud for learners to listen; Learners read silently; They identified words they were not familiar with; They worked to interpret and understand the content of the text.	Group discussion and interpretation of the text; Reports were done by group representatives that were identified by the group members. These entailed how presenters are trained to present on weather focus and the material they need.	Identification and classification of pronouns. The same text was used to teacher learners about pronouns.	Learners filled in learner assessment forms They identified pronouns as individuals and classified them. This was done to assess their level of understanding of the language structure
4. Activities used for extensive reading	Teacher read aloud Learners read silently They identified words they were not familiar with and recorded them in their journal books	Group discussions and interpretation of the text; Learners identified the intensive work of T.V presenters, comparing it with that of Radio presenters. They further identified the various advantages of weather focus. Reports were done by group representatives.	Not applicable.	Not applicable to this lesson

5. Learners' participation	Learners participated in reading, guided by the teacher through questions and answers for better understanding of the text.	Learners discussed as small groups; Group representatives report to the entire class	The teacher led learners' participation through questions. Learners were asked to identify the pronouns and their various types; formulate sentences using the same pronouns.	Learners wrote individual assessment activities to confirm their individual understanding and interpretation of the text.
6. Utilization of learners' experience	No data emerged to reflect this category.	Discussions were based on previous day's text- weather focus	Questions were asked on learners existing knowledge of nouns	Learners were given homework on further pronoun activities
7. Follow-up work	Questions and answers were used through out the lesson	Questions and answers on the read passage were used for feed back	Not applicable	Not applicable
8.Feed back	Oral corrections were done continuously.	Corrections were done orally through out the lesson	Oral corrections were done continuously	Marking was done immediately and feed back was given
9. Parents' involvement	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

SCHOOL: B

TEACHER: 2

CATEGORIES FOR OBSERVATION	LESSON 1	LESSON 2	LESSON 3	LESSON 4
	<b>Comprehension passage-reading</b>	<b>Discussions and interpretation</b>	<b>Grammar activities</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
1. Planning for reading lessons	Use NCS model plan ( see Appendix F2)	Included in plan (see Appendix F2)	Well planned (see Appendix F2)	Well planned (see Appendix F2)
2. Provision of reading material	Text books (Shuters English learners book) Factual description on environment; dictionaries	Text books- Same text	Same text ; activity books	Same text and learners' activity books
3. Activities used for intensive reading	Learners read silently; underlined difficult words; Looked for meaning as groups; They made presentations to the class on the content of the text relating it to their environment.	Questions and answers were used to facilitate interpretation and summary	Learners work as pairs to change the passage to present tense	Written activities on comprehension questions
4. Activities used for extensive reading	Learners read silently; underlined difficult words Looked for meaning as groups They made presentations to the class on the content of the text relating it to their own environment.	Questions and answers were used to facilitate interpretation and summary	Not applicable	Extensive reading nt assessed
5. Learners' participation	Learners read aloud as	Teacher asked	Learners participated	Written work was

	individuals, taking turns; Made presentations	questions and learners answered orally as individuals	as individuals, as pairs and as groups	done on comprehension questions
6. Utilization of learners' experience	Learners were referred to their own environment.	Learners were referred to the comprehension text regularly	Learners' knowledge of verbs and tenses was used	Learners' understanding of activities was based on what they did throughout the week
7. Follow-up work	The teacher asked questions on the read text; Questions were answered orally	Groups reported on their interpretation in summary form orally	Another activity on tenses was given	Not applicable
8. Feed back	Continuous feed back was done	Consolidation was done after each presentation	Learners' work was marked by the teacher as she moved around	Learners were given feed back on their responses; tenses were revised
9. Parents' involvement	No data emerged	No data emerged	No data emerged	No data emerged

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

SCHOOL: C

TEACHER: 3

CATEGORIES FOR OBSERVATION	LESSON 1	LESSON 2	LESSON 3	LESSON 4
	<b>Introduction of poetry</b>	<b>Reading of a poem and vocabulary building</b>	<b>Interpretation and analysis of the poem</b>	<b>Language structure and figures of speech</b>
1. Planning for reading lessons	Well planned according to NCS (see Appendix F2)	Well planned (see Appendix F2)	Well planned (see Appendix F2)	Well planned (see Appendix F2)
2. Provision of reading material	Pamphlets that had a poem; dictionaries	Pamphlets; dictionaries were	Pamphlets: dictionaries	Pamphlets; activity books

		used to unpack further the literal and figurative meaning of the poem		
3. Activities used for intensive reading	Teacher read aloud; Learners read silently; Learners underlined unusual words and phrases; Explanation on the structure and language of poem was done	Poem structure was explained further; Learners were referred to other poems for comparison and learners participated in identification of other figurative phrases	Learners interpreted and analysis the literal meaning of a poem and the lesson behind it as groups and reported to the entire class.	Learners identified figures of speech and were assisted by the teacher to unpack them
4. Activities used for extensive reading	Teacher read aloud; Learners read silently; Learners underlined unusual words and phrases	Not applicable	Learners interpreted and analysis the poem as groups and reported to the class	Not applicable
5. Learners' participation	Learners listened; read silently	Learners identified the similarities and difference as groups and gave reports	Learners participated as groups to analyze and interpret the poem	Identified the figures of speech and phrases; Reported on their findings as groups, referring to their activity books
6. Utilization of learners' experience	Learners were asked questions on the poem, that were related to their knowledge	Questions were asked on the previous day's work e.g "war, hunger, poverty, desperation have	Questions were asked on learners' knowledge and experience	No data emerged

		taken away her smile” What do you understand about this phrase from paragraph 2 of the poem? (Macmillan 2005)		
7. Follow-up work	Learners were given activities to do as home work	Learners did activities including self evaluation activities	Questions were asked and discussions were done.	Written class work on figures of speech was done and marked.
8.Feed back	Feed back was done as learners made reports	Feed back was done continuously	The teacher gave an oral summary of the poem	Homework was marked and answers were discussed
9. Parents’ involvement	Learners were made to read further poems at home and referred to their parents for assistance	No data emerged	No data emerged	No data emerged

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

SCHOOL: D

TEACHER: 4

CATEGORIES FOR OBSERVATION	LESSON 1	LESSON 2	LESSON 3	LESSON 4
	Reading of a story	Interpretation and analysis	Vocabulary building	assessment
1. Planning for reading lessons	Planned according to NCS (See Appendix F2)	Well planned (See Appendix F2)	Well planned (See Appendix F2)	Well planned (See Appendix F2)
2. Provision of reading material	A story from the text book ( Macmillan 2005) Topic- Going to	Same text ; loose papers	Same text ; exercise books; dictionaries	Vocabulary books; cut out pictures

	Grahamstown .			
3. Activities used for intensive reading	Teacher narrated the story; Learners read aloud as individuals; Learners underlined words they do not understand; Teacher consolidated the read story and the narrated one	Group discussions and reports; Interpretation of story through the use of pictures.	Learners identified words which they do not understand; Check meaning from dictionaries; Use them in sentences	Learners presented their vocabulary books; Presented their interpretations of story with pictures
4. Activities used for extensive reading	Teacher narrated the story; Learners read aloud as individuals; They underlined words they did not understand; Teacher consolidated the read story and the narrated one.	Group discussions and reports; Interpretation of story through the use of pictures	Learners identified words which they do not understand; Check meaning from dictionaries; Use them in sentences	Learners presented their vocabulary books; Presented their interpretations of story with pictures
5. Learners' participation	Learners participated as groups and as individuals, sharing ideas and reporting.	Learners shared ideas through discussions; Made cut and paste for story interpretation; Made drawings.	Learners participated as individuals, making pictures; Worked as groups to build vocabulary books.	Learners exchanged their story books for assessment; Group assessment was done
6. Utilization of learners' experience	Not evident	Previous understanding of the story was used. 3 learners from different groups were identified to stand in front and tell the class what they understood about the story that was read.	Learners' knowledge of words was used. Learners were made to use pictures of their own choice to interpret the story based on their understanding. They referred to their dictionaries.	Interpretation of the story was based on their existing knowledge as reflected by their collage and posters.
7. Follow-up work	Learners were instructed to write down the words they do not understand	Learners were made to compose their own stories	They were made to compile further their dictionaries	The teacher monitored and assessed learners' interpretations of

				the story using assessments under LO 5 (thinking and reasoning).
8.Feed back	Continuous feedback was done through out the lesson through questions and answers	Pictures and drawings were verified and corrections were done immediately as they tried to interpret the story. The teacher moved around them.	Development of dictionaries was monitored and corrections were done immediately. Every time they finished with the words they put in their dictionaries, they raised their hands and s/he would be given a chance to report to the group.	Learners were given feed back on their work
9. Parents' involvement	No data emerged	Learners were referred to their parents for assistance in order to get magazines and newspapers for cut outs.	Learners were referred to their parents for assistance in the making of their own dictionaries and identification of words they wanted to include in their dictionaries.	They were referred to their parents and community members to get magazines for more pictures

# **APPENDIX I**

## **CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS**

**ONE LESSON EACH FROM TEACHERS**

**1-4**