

**AN EXPLORATION OF STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE GRADE 8 LEARNERS'
READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on an *Action Research case study into the teaching of comprehension strategies to Grade 8 learners in a rural high school in the Eastern Cape, South Africa*. The learners in this study, who were studying English as an additional language, experienced difficulties in comprehending English text.

A series of six lessons were designed to teach comprehension strategies to improve the learners' performance in reading comprehension. The purpose of the intervention was to equip the learners with skills that would enable them to improve their reading comprehension and evaluate their effectiveness as readers. The intervention was also intended to assess my teaching, which was challenged by the need to deal with learners' poor levels of reading comprehension.

The data was collected using the following research techniques: interviews, questionnaires, non-participant observation, learners' and researcher's journals, document analysis. The data analysis revealed that a lack of resources to learn English; limited English language due to lack of exposure; and learners' lack of foundational knowledge from their primary schools were barriers to the successful teaching of comprehension strategies.

Despite such barriers, however, this research provides evidence that teaching comprehension strategies can be effective if it is taught systematically, and applied continuously. Personally, I learnt that I had to modify my methods of teaching due to the response of learners to the lessons taught.

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ACRONYMS

ACE (ELT)	Advanced Certificate in Education (English Language Teaching)
AL	Additional Language
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
DBE	Department of Basic Education
HSS	Human Social Science
LI	First Language
L2	Second Language
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Material
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NS	Natural Science
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this chapter is to introduce my research project, which aimed at improving the way I teach reading comprehension to grade 8 learners in a rural high school. It describes the research context in which the study took place, and presents the research goals and research questions. I also explain action research and justify my reasons for using this approach.

1.2 Context of the study

Schools in rural areas face the problem of learners who are unable to read English texts, and my school is not an exception to this challenge. Some grade 8 learners are able to read sentences in a reading comprehension passage, but they have no understanding of what they are reading. The majority do not have the ability to sift information relevant to the comprehension activities required from irrelevant details in the reading passage. This challenge caused me to focus my research on learners who found it difficult to understand English texts, and to seek strategies that would help them to comprehend the English texts that they were required to read in grade 8. Introducing reading comprehension strategies in grade 8 would involve training the learners to read English texts with understanding and be independent readers.

The Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality II (2000) reports that grade 6 South African learners lack skills in interpretive, inferential and critical reading (p. 1). Assessment made by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (2006) of grade 5 learners' ability to retrieve information, interpret and integrate ideas, shows that the majority were unable to reach even the low international benchmark (p.32). Fleisch (2008, p. v) says that the majority of South African primary school children from disadvantaged schools complete their primary schooling without being able to read in their instructional language. The majority of the learners I work with have *isiXhosa* as their home language, and they stay in communities and are part of families where *isiXhosa* is predominantly used as the medium of communication, thus making it difficult for them to understand and speak English. They are only exposed to English at school where it is the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), but that exposure is insufficient to develop competence in the language. This language barrier has, moreover, caused difficulty

in understanding content in other Learning Areas. According to Ngwenya (2003, p. 1):

In South Africa, many learners from disadvantaged townships and rural areas experience a diversity of learning problems of which one is certainly poor reading comprehension. Unfortunately some of these learners leave their primary schools and proceed to secondary schools with little or no support given in order to overcome their reading problems.

Fleisch (2008) states that 'those rural school children with limited reading material available in English or other languages, few opportunities to hear or speak English, and teachers with limited English proficiency, inhabit a world in which English is essentially a foreign language' (p.111).

By introducing grade 8 learners to some reading comprehension strategies, I hoped that I might improve their ability to read English texts with understanding and help them to find their studies more manageable.

1.3 Description of the research site

The high school in which I teach is in a rural area in the Eastern Cape. The school buildings are in a good state. It was a technical school consisting mainly of a number of workshops that were later on converted into a normal school. Some workshops have been turned into classrooms, a science laboratory, a computer laboratory and a library. Our library is not well stocked, but it has more English reading material than *isiXhosa* material.

The school has a shortage of textbooks in most learning areas, with languages suffering the most. It is difficult for learners to take English textbooks home because there are so few of them. They share the textbooks in the classroom. As teachers we rely on photocopying the material we need to use.

For quite a long time, teaching English at our school has been the responsibility of two teachers from grade 8 to grade 12. Each teacher has had to teach five classes which are

overcrowded. It was only last year that we had a vacant post at our school and a new teacher who was qualified to teach English was appointed.

During the time the research took place, the school had 19 teachers - 18 teachers were *isiXhosa* speakers and one was a *Xitsonga* speaker. There were 586 learners of which 580 were *isiXhosa* speakers and 6 were Zimbabweans, who spoke either Shona or Ndebele. The environment of our school does not cater for the *non-Xhosa* learners: the language used outside the classrooms, and even in many cases in the classroom, is mainly *isiXhosa*. At the time of the study, the teacher-learner ratio varied according to grades: in grade 8, we had 70 learners that were divided into two classes thus making a ratio of 1:35 in each class, but in other grades the ratio was 1: 57 or 1: 60. The classrooms therefore were overcrowded. Our time table had six periods per day in a ten day cycle and English had 8 periods in that ten day cycle.

Most of our learners are from extremely poor families where the main source of income is the old age governmental grant. Learners live with their grandparents some of whom cannot afford to buy them reading material, so they are not exposed to text outside of school even in their own home language. It is clear that the learners are not encouraged to read at their homes. There are a few learners whose parents are literate, who may be exposed to reading material like magazines and newspapers.

1.4 Research goals and questions

Research goals

- To develop a series of lessons to teach comprehension strategies in Grade 8 and to evaluate their effectiveness.
- To gain insight into and to improve my teaching of reading comprehension skills.

Research questions

- How successful are the lessons in developing learners' reading strategies and improving their reading comprehension?
- What aspects of the lessons are successful/unsuccessful? How can this be explained?
- What aspects of my teaching can be improved?
- What can be learned from this for the planning of teaching reading

comprehension in the future?

1.5 Action Research

The methodology for this study is action research as I am interested in improving my own teaching. Mertler (2009) states that action research allows teachers to study their own classrooms; their own instructional methods; their own students and their own assessment in order to better understand their teaching and to be able to improve its quality or effectiveness. This research methodology is appropriate for me as it implies being hands-on, and being practically involved in the teaching and learning situation. It allows me to be actively involved and to look at effectiveness of my role in the teaching and learning process.

Ferrance (2000) states that action research is a 'reflective approach' (p.1). It provides an opportunity for a teacher to review his/her practices and reflect on his/her work. This implies that I should constantly interrogate and review my teaching approach, reflecting on each lesson. This methodology has helped me to better understand my learners and be able to improve the quality of their reading comprehension.

McNiff and Whitehead (2006) state that "action research allows teachers to investigate their own work, to systematically monitor what they do and to find ways of making judgments about their own work. Its purpose is to empower the teacher" (p. 2). McNiff (2002) views action research as 'a practical way of looking at your own work to check whether it is as you would like it to be. It is called a self-reflective practice since it involves the teacher thinking about and reflecting on his/ her own work' (p. 5). Since I am interested in improving my teaching, checking my own work and reflecting on it, this gives me a chance to develop my knowledge and improve my practice.

Action research is said to function in cycles or spirals. Schmuck (2009) says that action research entails a series of steps: identification of a problem; planning the action; implementing the action; reflecting and evaluating the action and planning a new cycle. Each cycle influences the next, in that changes are made during the planning to suit the students' learning ability or the teacher's own practice.

1.6 The structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Appendices covering a variety of data can be found at the end of the thesis.

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the background of the research context, provides a description of the research site, research goals and questions. It also discusses action research.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical and research literature that informs this research.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used for this research. It discusses the research design and procedures I used to carry out this research.

Chapter 4 presents the analysed data that was generated from journals, worksheets, interviews and questionnaires.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings and presents a discussion of issues that emerged from the analysis in chapter 4 of the teaching of comprehension strategies. It presents recommendations and limitations of the research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, this research aimed at teaching comprehension strategies to the Grade 8 learners in a rural school in the Eastern Cape and to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies for this context. An additional, but equally important goal was to gain insight into and to improve my teaching of reading comprehension skills.

This chapter focuses on the teaching of comprehension strategies; some research into teaching reading comprehension in South Africa; learning outcomes and assessment standards as outlined in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades R-9 (2002).

2.2 Reading comprehension

2.2.1 What is reading comprehension?

Reading comprehension is often referred to as "the essence of reading." It can be described as "understanding a text that is read, or the process of constructing meaning from a text" (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 4-5). For comprehension to occur, words must be decoded and associated with their meanings in a reader's memory (Nel, Dreyer & Klopper, 2004). The Rand Report (cited in Israel & Duffy, 2009), defines comprehension as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (p. 32). Hirsch (2003) describes comprehension as "the ability to understand and gain meaning from what has been read and being able to communicate the information to others" while Boakye and Southey (2008) define text comprehension as "a learner's capacity to construct new knowledge or information from written texts" (p. 8), something which develops from reading volume.

Comprehension refers to the overall understanding process whereby meaning is constructed within sentence units, between adjacent sentences, and across larger units of text to the meaning of the text as a whole (Graves, Juel & Graves, 1998). Successful reading comprehension, according to Casanova (1988), depends not only

on readers' ability to access appropriate content and formal schemata, but also on their ability to monitor what they understand. Reading comprehension is effective if the reader:

- is able to read for meaning
- reads to remember content (Casanave, 1988, p. 283).

Alexander and Fox (2004), as cited in Israel and Duffy (2009) state that comprehension "is a process that involves three elements: reader, text, and activity. It results from the interaction of a person (reader) engaged with linguistic materials (text) for a self-generated purpose (activity)" (p. 228).

The reading process entails active, cognitive interaction between mind and text in order to interpret and comprehend the text. Reading comprehension is linked with a reader's prior knowledge that has been actively constructed and reconstructed as schema. Schema theory explains that "reading comprehension is an interactive process between the text and the reader's background knowledge and depends on the reader being able to relate information from the text to pre-existing background knowledge" (Bouazid & le Roux, p. 35). Each schema is connected to many other schemata in a complex mental network. As readers notice particular ideas or facts in a text, they match that information with background knowledge which enables them to construct a version of the text's meaning. When readers focus primarily on what they already know this is called 'top-down' processing (Mikulecky, 2008, p. 1-3).

However, Abadzi (2008) highlights that reading starts with what we call 'bottom-up' processing: tracking and interpreting individual letters in print. The brain isolates enough of the individual letters, in order for learners to understand the text (p. 586), and more so, reading requires practice to achieve automaticity and fluency as a necessary foundation for comprehension (p. 589). Eskey (1988) claims that in the bottom-up reading process, the reader decodes, letter-by-letter, word-by-word the written symbols in the text and then reassembles the pieces to form meaning (p. 93-100).

Israel and Duffy (2009, citing Au & Kaomea) claim that "reading comprehension relies on decoding skills (reading words accurately and fluently), plus knowledge in several domains (vocabulary) plus cognitive processing capacities (memory)" (p. 610), for, as Bouwer and

Jordaan (2005) argue that understanding of a passage does not depend only on understanding the sum of the meanings of the words which constitute the text, but on critically evaluating the flow of the text and self-monitoring one's level of understanding.

Reading does not simply imply a decoding of sound and letters but rather refers to the ability to make meaning of a text as well as to be able to offer a critique of the text. This is sometimes referred to as critical reading or critical language awareness (Janks, 2001).

Bouadzi and le Roux (2010, p. 43) state that comprehension needs critical thinking; a reader needs to be actively involved and constructively engaged in the process of focused reading, continually negotiating what he or she knows with what he or she is trying to understand. This involves interpretive skills; the ability to perceive the author's intention, awareness of the theme and the use of language to create specific effects. These interpretive skills refer to a reader's ability to read between the lines (Graves, Juel & Graves, 1998).

Reading comprehension can be affected by world knowledge, with many demonstrations that readers who possess rich prior knowledge about the topic of a text often understand it better than classmates with little prior knowledge (Pressley, 2000). Mikulecky, (2008, p. 1) states that:

When a reader reads a text, the textual information activates prior knowledge, and the prior knowledge, in turn activates expectations about what is in the text. This primarily unconscious, interactive process continues until the reader is satisfied with the match between text and prior knowledge, and thus comprehension occurs.

Researchers at Potchefstroom University indicate a bleak picture with regard to the reading comprehension levels of our learners. Reading is the skill upon which success in every academic area is based (Nel, et al., 2004). Navsaria, Pascoe and Kathard (2011) identify the inability of many South African learners to read critically and with comprehension as possibly the single greatest educational problem teachers confront, even in tertiary education.

2.2.2 The role of language proficiency in reading

Second language proficiency is the ability to speak or perform in an acquired language. Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) claim that language is the key to reading comprehension. In order to read a text and understand what one is reading, one has to know the language. Research reveals that many learners from disadvantaged schools can decode English texts fluently, but have very poor understanding of what they have read (Pretorius & Machet, 2004, p. 47). This suggests that being able to read in one's additional language is more than just being able to recognize letters and decode words but is the ability to construct meaning from the written word and be familiar with various forms of written texts.

Many learners, more especially those in rural areas, experience difficulty in learning through English as an additional language. Because of the context in which they are living and learning, many rural learners have limited English proficiency; as a result, they do not understand easily or make meaning of English text. Neither do learners have a good literacy foundation in their home language, especially those in the Eastern Cape. In the assessment administered by PIRLS (2006) to Grade 4 learners in all 11 official languages in South Africa, *isiXhosa* and *isiNdebele* speaking learners achieved the lowest average scores (van Staden & Howie, 2008, p. 5). Also the PIRLS 2006 results indicated that South African learners were struggling to develop the reading literacy competencies needed to make a successful transition to using reading as a tool for learning (p. 217).

Learners need more exposure to extensive reading in order to acquire more vocabulary that will develop their language proficiency. The vocabulary that learners would be able to acquire in this way, would also help them to read a text with understanding (Krashen, 1981; Waring & Nation, 2004). Cummins (1981) recommends the early and gradual introduction to English in primary schools in order to allow the learner sufficient time to acquire Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), which is needed to master the upper primary and secondary syllabus (pp. 16-29).

According to Krashen (1996), in order for second language learners to gain proficiency in the second language, they should acquire it rather than be taught. He feels that language should not be taught directly in primary school classrooms and believes that speech will emerge when the acquirer has received and accessed enough comprehensible input (p. 100).

It is argued that all languages develop through use and the more one uses a language, the more likely it is to develop (Pluddemann, 2002, p. 55). Learners in rural areas of South Africa need exposure to English language in order for them to understand the additional language. Such disadvantaged learners who lack exposure to English in their communities and in their schools, learn all their subjects in a language they do not understand - as a result, the Eastern Cape has a high failure rate in public tests and examinations. Pretorius and Machet (2003) state that reading is a core skill at school and all academic achievement depends to a lesser or greater extent on reading literacy.

2.2.3 Reading in an additional language

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grade R - 9 (2002) states that learners should learn at least one additional language (p. 4). Most schools in South Africa have adopted English as the first additional language and in African schools it is used as the LoLT from Grade 4 onwards, not considering the challenges of learning through the medium of an additional language. According to Lathy (2006), when the government decided that black learners were to begin their schooling in their mother tongue and then transfer to learning in English in Grade 4, no specific plan had been developed by the Department of Education as to how this transition was to be successfully achieved.

Many black learners experience severe difficulties in the classroom, and teachers who are themselves not fluent in English are at a loss to provide appropriate assistance. However, the LoLT remains English, resulting in many learners learning in a foreign language, i.e. a language that is not their home language and which is often unknown to them as they have little exposure to English outside school. This situation has created numerous teaching and learning challenges contributing to low achievement (Navsaria, et al. 2011).

Donald et al., (1997, p. 57) as cited in Ngwenya (2003), highlights that before the change of government in South Africa in 1994, the policy that applied to all speakers of languages other than English and Afrikaans was that, beyond the first four years of school (i.e. in Standard 3 which is now Grade 5) the medium of instruction had to shift to one 'official' language, at that time either English or Afrikaans. In practice, this meant that the majority of children had to learn through a language other than their first language (i.e. the language in which they are most competent and in which they feel most comfortable). The fact is that most learners in

the rural areas are neither comfortable nor competent in English. Moreover, Eskey warns that teachers 'must not lose sight of the fact that language is a major problem in second language reading' (1988, p. 97).

According to Heugh (2006), the majority of learners, especially in poor socio-economic communities where literacy levels are low, require at least six years of quality learning and teaching of a second language before they are ready to use the language as a LoLT; therefore English should not become the LoLT until grade 7. However, currently black South African children use English as their LoLT from the beginning of the Intermediate Phase (i.e. Grade 4). It is important that learners enter the Intermediate Phase with solid foundation skills that have initiated the development of reading and writing. Not only do these learners need to acquire Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), they also need to develop CALP, which will help them to develop interpretive skills (Cummins, 2008).

Second language readers' mental schemata are based on their first language and cultural background. This means that what second language readers encounter in text and how they interpret it will vary due to differing expectations about language structure and cultural attitudes towards literacy (Mikulecky, 2008).

The NCS (2002) states that learners are able to transfer the literacies they have acquired in their home language to their first additional language. However Coetzee (2008, citing Langan, 1996) maintains that African languages have to be developed to become a vehicle of meaningful learning for their speakers, thus making additional languages supplementary in the learning process. There is "limited material available in *isiXhosa* to facilitate the development of the home language" (Lemmer, 1996, p. 228). However, if learners are ill-equipped in their home language (in the case of this research, *isiXhosa*) little can be achieved in developing and promoting English in our schools (Coetzee, 2008).

A child who has not yet developed CALP through reading and writing in the LI, who is placed in a language immersion situation where he/she is expected to use the second language exclusively, will suffer deficits both in LI and L2. L2 will suffer as it cannot develop adequately due to the fact that LI has not yet reached the stage of decontextualisation (Cummins, 1999). Research has provided evidence that "black children in South Africa fail to master English reading because they have not mastered basic reading skills in their own languages" (Pretorius, 2000, p. 35). The Molteno Project under the directorship of Professor

Len Lanham, found that black children were failing to master English reading as they had not acquired basic reading skills in their first language (Lathy, 2006, citing Kingwill, 1998).

Cognitive development is more successfully achieved when a person's mother tongue is used as a language of learning. Without sound cognitive skills, learners struggle to make sufficient academic progress in the additional language. The learners in this study have *isiXhosa* as their home language and stay in communities and are part of families where *isiXhosa* is the predominant medium of communication. They are however expected to learn through and be taught in the medium of English, when most of them only interact with the language in the classroom. This results in these learners seldom being able to master the LoLT, English. In addition, learning in a language other than the home language poses a range of challenges and many learners experience difficulty at school (Cummins & Swain, 1986). Lathy (2006) highlights that the children's understanding and progress can be hampered by the fact that they may not be competent enough in the L2 for it to be an effective vehicle for learning. Having an additional language as the medium of teaching and learning may also encourage non-involvement of parents and worsens the fact that they cannot help their children with their schoolwork (Coetzee, 2008).

2.3 Comprehension strategies

2.3.1 What are comprehension strategies?

According to Bouazid and le Roux (2010) a strategy is "a conscious procedure carried out with the purpose of solving a problem" (p. 44). Block and Pressley (2002) state that comprehension strategies are specific, learned procedures that foster active, competent, self-regulated, and intentional reading, while Nel, et al. (2004) define comprehension strategies as 'planned and purposeful tools' that strategic readers use to draw meaning from text. They help readers to engage with the text and to monitor their comprehension (p. 96). The comprehension strategies which readers use indicate how they conceive a task, what textual cues they attend to, how they make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not understand. Strategies reveal a reader's resources for understanding (Block, 1986, p. 465).

The goal of comprehension strategies is to enable learners to read independently. They are the conscious steps that readers use to make sense of the text (Caskey, 2008, p. 170).

Strategies such as monitoring comprehension, and asking/answering questions should be modelled to help students to become purposeful readers who are in control of their own reading comprehension (Adler, 2004, p. 1). Effective comprehension strategies can be accomplished through cooperative learning which involves students working together as partners or in small groups (Adler, 2004). Beck, McKeown, Hamilton and Kucan (1997) add that there are other common sets of strategies that can be used when reading for comprehension such as, summarizing what you have read; monitoring your reading to make sure it is still making sense; and analyzing the structure of the text.

For learners to be able to extract meaning from texts, strategies such as identifying a purpose for reading; activating background knowledge; surveying; summarizing and synthesizing should be practised (The Centre for Cognitive Development, 1995, p. 1)

In order for learners to be able to monitor their comprehension and understand what they read, they need the following strategies: to recognize text structure (whereby a learner will distinguish between main points and supporting details); integrate information; interpret the text; paraphrase; re-read and solve vocabulary problems (Block, 1986, pp. 473-4). Ribbens (2008) indicates six strategies that could help students' reading comprehension: making connections, inferring and predicting, questioning, visualizing, monitoring/clarifying, summarizing and evaluating (p. 110). For learners to be able to comprehend, they must learn "to make inferences, integrate information, utilize the text structure, and monitor their comprehension" (Israel and Duffy, 2009, p. 39). In my situation, some of my learners still struggle to read, they cannot decode and it is difficult for them to make meaning of the text.

2.3.2 Strategies selected as suitable for grade 8 learners

Israel and Duffy (2009) claim that a teacher can narrow down the teaching of strategies for the benefit of the learners. Among the many strategies for reading comprehension researchers have identified, I chose to focus on three: surveying (skimming and scanning), strategies for making sense of vocabulary (e.g. using a dictionary) and summarizing. As an English teacher, I chose these because I see them as the basics for learners in a rural school, and the ones most likely to empower my learners to learn independently. Rather than confusing them with many strategies, I thought these three would be beneficial as a starting point.

The learners can improve their comprehension of texts if they are taught strategies such as the ones described above, which they can later on apply (Franzen & Allington, 2011, p. 220). These are strategies generally related to higher order skills. Cummins (2000) claims that it is the language associated with higher order thinking skills such as evaluating, predicting or classifying that relate to learning and are required for academic tasks across the curriculum.

2.3.2.1 Surveying (skimming and scanning)

Before one reads a passage in detail, one needs to survey it to get a general idea of what is in it. One of the most important ways of surveying is scanning, which according to Day (1993) is a skill for all learners when they need access to the details in a text. Day maintains that scanning involves moving your eyes quickly down the text seeking for specific words and key ideas. It is used to locate specific information quickly, searching for key words and phrases that are likely to indicate the information a learner is seeking, rather than looking at each word in a text. When scanning, learners look through a text for particular pieces of information, paying close attention to those sections where they expect to find the required information and looking out for words that relate to it (p. 127-136).

The key words and ideas might help a learner to understand and remember what he/she was reading about. Those key words are useful in locating information which a learner has to remember completely and precisely. Scanning involves finding and recognizing chunks in a text. It trains a learner to look for clues and to realise that words in a text are recognisable and accessible. Scanning might also be used when looking for reviewing information (Day, 1993, p. 137-143).

Once the learner has scanned the text, then he/she can skim it, skimming is one of the important ways of surveying.

Nuttall (1996) writes:

Skimming is glancing rapidly through a text to determine its gist. It enables the reader to select texts, or parts of texts that are worth spending time on. Reading the beginning and the end of paragraphs where information is often summarized gives the reader an idea of what the text is about i.e. getting an overview of the main points (p. 49).

Skimming is an important technique that needs to be taught to learners, as it gives them insight into what is happening in the text without reading it in detail. It helps making them aware of what is important in the text. The Centre for Cognitive Development (1995, p. 3) suggests that when skimming a learner should:

- Look at the title and sub headings.
- Look at the illustrations and their captions.
- Look at any words which are written in bold, italics or capitals.
- Quickly read the first and the last paragraphs of the passage, as authors often summarize the ideas in these paragraphs.
- Quickly read the first sentence of each paragraph, as this sentence will often contain the main idea of the paragraph.

Skimming helps learners to get the gist of the passage, to think about it and develop questions about it. Surveying a text guides learners in developing insight into it, helping to make them better readers, and therefore improving their comprehension and thus their academic achievement.

2.3.2.2 Vocabulary skills

A large vocabulary is attained mainly through reading, in other words, the more exposure learners have to written texts whether at home, through self-selected reading, or at school, the more vocabulary is acquired. Nation (1994) claims that among the strategies of reading comprehension, vocabulary development is one of the most important. "The training of knowledge of word meanings can be seen as critical for reading comprehension" (Israel & Duffy, 2009, p. 39).

Vocabulary knowledge is the core skill possessed by successful fluent readers that enables them to read faster and better with much greater comprehension along with much improved recall (Spadorcia, 2001). Citing Mezynski (1983), Israel and Duffy (2009), suggest that comprehension of text "is a function of a reader's ability to efficiently locate and access word meanings when reading, and the more quickly a reader can access semantic meanings the deeper the text comprehension" (p. 325).

Learners need to know 90% of vocabulary in a text they read in order to understand it (Nation, 1994). Similarly, Hirsch (2003) states that vocabulary experts agree that adequate reading comprehension depends on a person knowing between 90 - 95 % of words in a text. Knowing that percentage of words allows the reader to get the main idea of what is being said and therefore guess correctly what the unfamiliar words probably mean (p. 6). Guessing a meaning for a word from context clues is the most useful of all the strategies, but it is only possible if the reader understands the text as a whole (Ribbens, 2008).

Also Nation (1994) maintains there are various strategies to cope with unknown vocabulary such as 'guessing and using a dictionary' (p. 173). If learners acquire these skills, it allows them to be independent of a teacher and to be prepared to tackle new, unseen texts. Sometimes the meanings of words are guessed from the context, but for this to happen effectively the text must be largely understood (Horst, Cobb & Meara, 1998). For learners to be able to guess a meaning, they need more word-knowledge so that learners could be in control of the text. Guessing requires a lot of practice over several weeks so that learners can use it without causing a major interruption to their reading (Nation, 1994).

Dictionary skills should be taught to help learners understand the meaning of unknown words and gain insight into what they read. A teacher should model how to use a dictionary to learners while in lower grades. They have to know that a dictionary is an important tool when learning. Learners have to learn how to find the meaning of a word from the dictionary. Apart from just getting to know the meaning of a word from the dictionary, a teacher should model how to look for the meaning that fits well within the context of the text. A teacher should illustrate the correct way to look for the meaning of a word from the dictionary, checking thoroughly for the meaning which is appropriate within the context of the passage (Israel & Duffy, 2009).

However, dictionaries contain a great deal of other information that learners can use in order to use vocabulary effectively (Nation, 1994). The more one's vocabulary grows, the more one reads with understanding and the gateway to learning is opened. The best way of improving vocabulary is to use a dictionary regularly. The NCS (2002) stresses the point that learners should use dictionaries and a simple thesaurus to understand their texts (p. 101). Carter and McCarthy (1988) argue that dictionary use 'is a valid activity for foreign learners of English, both as an aid to comprehension and production' (p. 11).

There seems to be a relationship between knowledge of vocabulary and reading comprehension (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). As learners' vocabulary grows, so their ability to comprehend what they read grows also. The size of learners' vocabulary plays a crucial role in reading comprehension (Pressley, 2000).

Vocabulary acquisition is therefore likely to be useful in enhancing students' ability to comprehend texts. According to the NCS, a learner in Grade 8 should be able to demonstrate a reading vocabulary of between 5000 and 6500 common words (NCS, 2002, p. 101).

2.3.2.3 Summarizing

A summary is defined in the Oxford dictionary (2010) as "a short statement that gives only the main points of a passage, not the details" (p. 1494). Summarizing requires students to determine what is important in what they read and put it more briefly in their own words. It involves generating multiple main ideas from across the text and skilfully combining those ideas with important supporting information.

The Centre for Cognitive Development (1995) claims that before summarizing, readers should make sure that they have read the text in detail and understand its main ideas and how they are connected to each other. Writing a summary involves taking notes of important facts. In each paragraph of the text to be summarized, there are details that explain and support the main idea; a reader is expected to be aware of those details from the passage. The use of a strategy like summarizing after each paragraph has come to be seen as effective strategy for building students' comprehension (Palinscar & Brown, 1984).

In order for learners to cope with summarizing, a teacher should give clear instructions that will enable learners to know what is expected from them. Adler (2004) agrees that clear instructions in summarizing help students. Learners should be given instructions like:

- Identify or generate main ideas.
- Connect the main or central ideas.
- Eliminate unnecessary information.

Summarizing a passage keeps a learner focused, interacting with the text and developing critical thinking. According to the NCS, "learners should develop thinking and reasoning, as

well as access, process and use information for learning. Learners should be able to take notes and organize points” (NCS, 2002, p. 107). Summarizing enables learners to work independently even in other learning areas.

(The Barrett Taxonomy, n.d.) also states that when summarizing the learner has to organize ideas or information to produce a desired thought. The learner should learn to recollect facts from memory (i.e. what was learnt from the passage and to know facts in sequential order). The facts may be condensed using direct statements or paraphrases. For example, learners can be asked the following questions:

- What has happened up to this point?
- What is the passage about? (use your own words)

The learner at this juncture is expected to provide the main ideas in the passage. As I have indicated earlier on, reading is an interactive process in which the reader constructs meaning with the text; therefore, our learners need to be helped to learn to engage with the text. This means moving beyond a literal understanding of a text, and allowing our learners to use their own knowledge while reading. It may be a challenge for our learners at the beginning to create their own understanding; however, as they become accustomed to reading and summarizing, improvement in selecting facts in a text will be attained. Thus summarizing develops their CALP.

2.4 Teaching comprehension

2.4.1 Teaching surveying (skimming and scanning)

As indicated in section 2.3.2.1 above learners’ reading comprehension can be improved by teaching them how to skim and scan. The goal of skimming is to identify the main points, therefore teaching the strategy will enable the learners to focus on important ideas in a passage. The learners should be trained to identify the major themes throughout the passage. Also the teacher must train the students to look for key words when scanning a text and that will help them in reading fast and activating the mind (Grellet, 1982).

When teaching skimming and scanning, a teacher should read through the text with the learners to give them a general understanding of it and model the use of skimming and

scanning; and deliberately guide students' application of learning in text (McGill - Allington, 2011, p. 266). For example, a teacher can give learners a text and use guiding questions for learners to identify key words or main ideas in a text. Also when teaching vocabulary knowledge using a dictionary, learners are looking for specific words, and in that process of checking words, they use mostly scanning. The teachers should encourage students to use these strategies and more practice should be done more especially when they read their textbooks. When students are thoroughly taught the strategies, they will soon realize that every word does not need to be read and fully understood and they will no longer be bound by the text (Grellet, 1982).

A teacher can take advantage of media "fads" to bring articles of high interest into class and point out how useful it is to know about something before reading. Also, the use of a telephone directory and a page of classified advertisements when teaching scanning could bring the essence of scanning to light. Learners should know that scanning is used when you look for something familiar like checking a cell number from a cell phone. (Day, 1993, p. 126).

Skimming and scanning prepare learners to recognize key concepts and sentences in a text. These strategies increase their vocabulary and reading speed. Day (1993) highlights that skimming and scanning help learners to find and recognize chunks of text and promote recall.

2.4.2 Teaching vocabulary

A teacher should come up with various methods of teaching vocabulary that will generate curiosity and interest in learners to expand their vocabulary, for example, using a dictionary and keeping vocabulary notebooks.

The use of dictionaries should be part of the lessons throughout the year and not be taught in isolation in a block. Additionally, using a dictionary is a skill which needs to be taught gradually with scaffolded practice (Wright, 1998). A teacher should illustrate to the learner the correct way to look for the meaning of a word from the dictionary, checking thoroughly the meaning which fits well within the context of the text. When students are taught vocabulary in a thorough fashion, their comprehension of what they read improves (Pressley, 2000).

McKenzie (1990) used dictionary work extensively with his class. He taught his learners the following process to compile a word list:

- The learners wrote a sentence on an index card and underlined the difficult words.
- Underneath each word they wrote a meaning which they guessed from the context of the sentences.
- On the back they wrote the dictionary definition, part of speech and any synonyms which could fit in the context.

Modelling and scaffolding learners on how to use a dictionary may help them to participate actively in any given activity that requires searching for the meaning of words in a dictionary and work independently at some stage. A teacher should advise learners to buy dictionaries that are suitable for their level so that they quickly understand the meaning of words. Murray (2009) stresses the importance of choosing a dictionary at the appropriate level for additional language learners, for example, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* or the *Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary*. However, for Grade 8 learners struggling with reading comprehension, the *Longman South African School Dictionary* may be more useful (<http://www.mml.co.za/longman/Longmanschool.htm>).

Citing Scott et al., (2008), Wells (2010) states that using a dictionary is a well established method for learning new words and a strategy which can benefit learners in all subjects, providing positive learning opportunities including the possibility of looking up problematic words without interrupting the lesson (p. 25).

When teaching vocabulary development using a dictionary, a teacher may at some stage select a text with some unknown words that will challenge the thinking of learners and expand their vocabulary. The teacher's task is to know at what level to extend the learners' existing knowledge and how best to do this. Applying Krashen's theory of Comprehensible input + 1 (Krashen, 1981) would be relevant. The learners should be able to understand the major part of the text but be challenged to add to their knowledge with a certain number of new words (Wells, 2010, p. 25).

The learners should be encouraged by the teacher to have vocabulary notebooks where they write new words, define them and use them in sentences. By so doing learners would compile their own dictionaries or glossaries. The teacher could also introduce vocabulary cards where learners in pairs could ask one another the meaning of words. Also crosswords and scrambled words help word retention. Research indicates that there is a relationship between teaching vocabulary and improving comprehension (Nel, et al., 2004).

In rural schools, more practice in developing vocabulary skills is needed in order to improve learners' reading comprehension.

2.4.3 Teaching summarizing

Guthrie, Wigfield and Perencevich (2004) state that summarizing refers "to forming an accurate, abstract representation of text after reading it all" (p. 15); it is then the duty of a teacher to model appropriate techniques that will help learners to quickly understand how to come up with accurate facts when summarizing. Learners should be taught thoroughly how to locate keywords and key ideas in a text. If learners are well trained, they will gain confidence in working on their own. Teachers should model and explain comprehension strategies, have students practice such strategies with teacher support, and also let students know that they are expected to continue using the strategies on their own. It is critical that teachers help their students create meaning from the texts they read (Pressley, 2000).

When teaching a summary, the teacher has to make a careful selection of a text whereby learners can easily relate to it, more especially second language learners (Guthrie et al., 2004, p. 15). When students are first learning a comprehension strategy, they should encounter texts that do not make heavy demands in other respects, such as background knowledge and vocabulary load (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

According to Duke and Pearson (2002), when teaching how to write a summary, a teacher can use a rule governed approach where students are taught to follow a set of step-by-step procedures:

- Rule 1: Delete unnecessary material
- Rule 2: Delete redundant material
- Rule 3: Compose a word to replace a list of items

Through teacher modeling, group practice, and individual practice, students can learn to apply these rules to create brief summaries of text (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 12).

When giving learners a text, a teacher can use guiding questions that will lead and help learners to get the information required in each paragraph. A teacher can train learners to summarize using different organizers such as, mind maps and flow charts to identify key points and ideas in a text, which will help the learners to understand what they read. A teacher can also introduce the learners to tabulating, so that they can use the skill even when studying other learning areas like history. Mills (1987) says that when teaching summarizing, learners can work in pairs. They both read the text. Each writes down the main ideas; they read those ideas to each other and discuss them (p. 94).

2.5 Teaching reading strategies

Teachers have a significant role to play in helping students overcome barriers to understanding and interpreting the text. Teachers should teach skills and strategies clearly and directly to learners (Bouazid & le Roux, 2010). Strategies must be taught directly and intensively with the ultimate goal that learners are able to use the trained strategies autonomously, skilfully and appropriately (Klapwijk & Du Toit, 2009, p. 80). Franzen and Allington (2011) claim that teachers should teach strategies clearly and directly and model them.

Teachers must model the use and guide students' application of the strategies when reading the text. Therefore teacher modelling plays a crucial role in enhancing reading comprehension strategies. A teacher is there to support learners until they improve their reading comprehension (Bouazid & le Roux, 2010). Furthermore, a teacher can create a collaborative learning environment which fosters the development and exploration of ideas, and improves students' background knowledge relevant to the text being studied (Pressley, 2000).

2.6 Importance of scaffolding

Scaffolding is a metaphor to describe the type of assistance offered by the teacher or peer to support learning. In the process of scaffolding the teacher helps the learner master a task or a concept that he or she is initially unable to grasp independently. As the learner masters the task, the teacher begins the gradual removal of scaffolding which allows the learner to work independently.

When learners are scaffolded in any task with the appropriate level of support, they gradually develop control of their own work and perform the tasks independently (Lipscomb, Swanson & West, 2004). McGill-Franzen and Allington (2011) suggest two types of scaffolding. The first is a careful sequencing of skills so that concepts and skills build gradually upon a strong, coherent foundation. Secondly, it must be an on-going teacher-learner dialogue that demonstrates directly to the learner the kind of processing or thinking that must be done in order to accomplish a particular task successfully (p. 266). Therefore, a teacher's support will enable a learner to solve a problem that he or she would not otherwise be able to solve independently. In relation to scaffolding reading strategies, Armbruster, Lehr and Osborn (2003, p. 53) claim that teachers should tell readers why and when they should use strategies, what strategies to use, and how to apply them.

2.7 The NCS with regard to vocabulary development using a dictionary, surveying and summarizing

The curriculum frames what must be taught. The South African curriculum uses learning outcomes to give specific focus to particular kinds of knowledge and skills, and to make them clear and understandable. Vocabulary development, surveying and summarizing are included in the assessment standards to be used to organize teaching and evaluate learning outcomes.

The NCS Grades R-9 (2002) for English additional language learners stresses the need for learners to know the meaning of words and how to use them in order to become competent in their additional language and to develop critical thinking from grade 7 upwards. The curriculum mentions the use of dictionaries and a simple thesaurus for development of vocabulary which is needed in rural schools to aid learners with their limited vocabulary.

The curriculum provides strong support for those learners who will use their First Additional Language as the LoLT. By the end of grade 9, these learners should be able to use their home language and first additional language effectively and with confidence for a variety of purposes, including learning (2002, p. 4).

The relevant assessment standards for my study are:

Learning Outcome 3: Read and Viewing

- Summarizes information (p. 99).
- Distinguishes main points from supporting detail (p. 97)

Learning Outcome 3: Read and Viewing

- Shows some understanding of how reference books work:
- Shows knowledge in the use of content page and index to find information and uses dictionary and simple thesaurus (p. 101).

Learning Outcome 3: Reading and viewing

- Demonstrates an understanding of between 5000 and 6500 common words in grade 8, and learners who will study other Learning Areas through their additional language should aim for 6500 words (p. 101).

2.8 Research on teaching reading comprehension in South Africa

Teaching reading comprehension in South Africa has many challenges that have hampered the interest and development of reading in learners. Klapwijk and Van der Walt (2011) argue that “while ample attention is paid to the professional development of teachers for teaching reading in South Africa, little attention is paid to the professional development of comprehension instruction. As a result, it seems little, if any, formal comprehension instruction exist in schools, and teachers claim that they are not aware of existing comprehension instructional frameworks for teaching” (p.3).

As a result, many English additional language (AL) students have serious reading comprehension problems, which means that they have ineffective and limited access to the rich sources of knowledge provided by print-based materials in the learning context (Ngwenya, 2003).

Many rural learners do not receive sufficient opportunities to practice reading and writing at school. They need to be given more texts to improve their vocabulary and reading with understanding. Mostly learners are given worksheets where they are required to fill in single words. Therefore learners do not have enough opportunity to develop academic literacy through practice due to limited resources (Navsaria, et al., 2011).

The genre of the "comprehension exercise" in schools is said to be a prime inculcator of thoughtless and non-interactive reading practices. Graville (2001) has observed that doing a comprehension and answering the comprehension questions often count as reading and substitute for other types of reading activity, thus confusing the active process of comprehension.

To resolve the situation, Klapwijk and Van der Walt (2011) state that training workshops for teachers would enable them to update and improve teaching strategies and empower them in their delivery of the curriculum in the present context. Teachers would also learn more about providing support to learners who are experiencing difficulties. Graville (2001) states that teachers need to be encouraged to teach comprehension strategies thereby increasing the possibilities of improved comprehension.

Learners in disadvantaged areas should be taught strategies that would include repetition of what has been read and that may promote remembering the information more effectively, re-reading certain parts of a text that could assist them in answering questions about the text and making notes to enhance text recall (Klapwijk & Nel, 2003).

Fleisch (2008) claims that young children have received little systematic instruction in reading; and they read and write very little. Pressley (2002) argues that in South Africa, there is strong evidence that comprehension instruction does not occur in many classrooms (p. 11-27).

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the literature that supports my study. In it, I explored reading in an additional language, literature on reading comprehension and comprehension strategies, teaching of comprehension strategies, and the significance of modelling and scaffolding. I also reported on research on teaching reading comprehension in South Africa and the requirements of the curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research design and procedures. It reminds the reader about my research goals and research questions. It explains action research as a method and its suitability for this research project. It covers the procedures involved in sampling; the construction of a series of lessons on comprehension strategies; methods of data collection; data analysis; issues related to validity and ethics; and the limitations of the research.

3.2 The research goals and research questions

Hammersley (1992 as cited in Maxwell 2005, p 15) points out that "your goals shape the descriptions, interpretations, and theories you create in your research" (p. 15). This study is guided by the following goals:

- To develop a series of lessons to teach comprehension strategies and to evaluate their effectiveness.
- To gain insight into and to improve my teaching of reading comprehension skills.

In order to achieve these goals, I framed the following research questions:

- How successful were the lessons in developing learners' reading strategies and improving their reading comprehension?
- What aspects of the lessons were successful/ unsuccessful? How can this be explained?
- What aspects of my teaching could be improved?

3.3 Action research

Ferrance (2000) states that action research is a real and immediate action taking place with possible solutions while the research is being undertaken. A researcher works through cycles

of intervention, taking note of the issue as it unfolds and seeing how the situation can be improved (McNiff, 2000)

The main purpose of this research was to look critically at my teaching, reflecting on each lesson designed to develop comprehension strategies and evaluating its effectiveness for the learners.

3.3.1 Action research and its suitability for this research

Mertler (2009) states that action research allows teachers to study their own classrooms, their own instructional methods, their own students and their own assessments in order to better understand their teaching and to be able to improve its quality or effectiveness. This research method is suitable for a teacher in the classroom as it implies being hands-on, and being involved in the teaching and learning situation. It focuses critically on a particular problem being encountered in the teacher's own situation. I realised that in our school we have a problem of Grade 8 learners who read English texts without understanding. As action research is about self-development, I chose it to evaluate my teaching methods and also to gain insight into how to deal with Grade 8 learners' problems with reading comprehension.

Action research focuses on a teacher recognising a problem that needs attention. I was aware that I had a problem in my teaching of reading comprehension skills. I needed more information on strategies to use when teaching English texts in order to help my learners, as well as to empower myself as an English teacher. Teaching comprehension strategies was one of the components I had neglected. The NCS Grades R-9 points out that learners should demonstrate various reading and viewing strategies for comprehension. For example, they should use strategies in order to access information. I knew from the NCS what strategies the learners need to acquire, but I did not know how to teach them. I therefore formulated research goals and questions that revolved around the problem of teaching strategies of reading comprehension that could help the learners to understand English texts.

Elliot (1991) states that a necessary precondition of action research is the need to initiate change by the teacher. Through inquiry and reflection, a teacher could investigate an area of

concern needing some sort of intervention. I hoped to fulfil this by developing and implementing a response to the curriculum through my own experience in teaching.

The action research approach is suitable for study as it provides an opportunity for a teacher to review her practices and reflect on her work. Ferrance (2000) states that action research is a "reflective approach" (p. 1). This method also had the potential to help me to better understand my learners and more importantly to improve the quality of their reading comprehension. This implied that I should constantly interrogate and review my teaching approach and record my reflections.

McNiff and Whitehead (2006) highlight that action research "allows teachers to investigate their own work; to systematically monitor what they do and find ways of making judgments about their work. Its purpose is to empower the teacher" (p. 2). McNiff (2002) views action research as a practical way of looking at your own work to check whether it is as you would like it to be. It is also called a self-reflective practice since it involves you thinking about and reflecting on your own work (p. 5). Since I was interested in improving my teaching, checking my own work and reflecting on it, this gave me a chance to develop my knowledge and improve my practice, as action research is about gaining personal understanding and self improvement in a professional sense.

Hopkins (2008) prefers the term "classroom research" as he points out that teachers are constantly researching their classroom methods which could be helpful to themselves and their colleagues if analysed as a formal piece of research. Teacher's research need not focus on a specific problem but may be to better understand the teaching situation and to see if there is room for improvement in an interesting and relevant context to fit in with the required teaching and learning of the school. Constantly looking at one's own classroom teaching to see what works and what does not work is a practical way to look for improvement (McNiff, 2002).

McNiff (2002) states that action research functions in cycles or spirals as follows: identify an area of practice to be investigated; imagine a solution; implement the solution; evaluate the solution; and change practice in the light of the evaluation. Koshy (2010) says that action research will enable one to work flexibly, as it allows freedom to plan, act, evaluate and reflect (p.7). Schmuck (2009) says that action research entails a series of steps:

- identification of a problem,

- planning the action,
- implementing the action,
- reflecting and evaluating the action,
- planning a new cycle.

I prepared the lessons conforming to Schmuck's cycles. As cycles build on each other, I planned my lessons to teach a different strategy in each cycle. This was done in the context of giving learners a comprehension passage and applying strategies taught. I assessed and improved my planning and teaching in each lesson as a result of conducting observations and reflections.

The steps involved in my research were as follows: **Step**

1: identify the problem

- Identifying learners' inability to read comprehension passages with understanding and the lack of knowledge in my teaching practice with regard to comprehension strategies.

Step 2: Planning the action

- A lesson unit on comprehension strategies was planned.

Step 3: Implementing the action

- researcher taught the lesson unit to learners in Grade 8.

Step 4: Reflecting and Evaluating

- The researcher, colleague and learners in their journals reflected on and evaluated the lesson unit taught.

Step 5: Planning a new cycle

- The reflection done by the researcher, colleague and learners influenced the planning of each subsequent lesson in the cycle.

In my study, I planned six lessons that would spread over six weeks. Each lesson constituted a cycle. In the first cycle I noted the challenges I was faced with: for example, learners were unable to understand English texts because they lacked vocabulary thus causing them to have limited English. That led me to design worksheets that encouraged learners to practice the vocabulary development strategies and promote reasoning (see appendix 3a). The following

strategies were taught over the entire period of the research:

- Vocabulary development (using a dictionary)
- Surveying(skimming and scanning)
- Summarizing (using point form summary, tables, flow charts and mind mapping).

This approach is in line with the NCS (2002), which requires that strategies like summarizing be used for reading English texts in Grade 8. Also the NCS stresses the point that learners should use a dictionary and simple thesaurus to understand text (p. 101).

Lessons were designed in the light of the evaluation of the previous cycle. This allowed me to be flexible; Koshy (2010) points out that action research allows flexibility as each cycle influences the next one. I planned the first lesson knowing what I wanted to achieve. Through observation and my reflection I had to change my approach to fit the situation of the class. In all the lessons conducted, the data from the participants had an impact on changing my methods of teaching. The flexibility of action research helped me in implementing the lesson and acting on the problem. Worksheets were used by the learners throughout the programme and they formed part of the data.

The programme was designed to be carried out during the first term. One period of 50 minutes was used to teach English comprehension strategies every week except on Wednesdays where the periods were 30 minutes. I reflected on each lesson in a diary/journal (see appendix 7b). Learners were also given 5 minutes before the end of the period to reflect on the lesson in their journals using simple guiding questions (e.g. Did you understand the lesson? What helped you to understand the comprehension?) (see Appendix 7a). Learners were given a choice to reflect either in *isiXhosa* or English.

O'Leary (2004) says that action research calls for participation and collaboration between researchers, practitioners and other stakeholders (p. 139). In line with this, instead of researching 'on' students I was conducting research 'with' them (Rodriquez, 2001) to build a collaborative partnership that was focused not only on learning new information, but also on transforming the existing situation (Rivet, et al., 2003:4).

The learners and I worked collaboratively towards the same goal of improving their reading

comprehension. I made them aware that their reflections on the lesson would guide me in teaching them. Schmuck (2009) states that collaborative learning supports higher achievement and develops thinking skills (p.7). The NCS also encourages teachers to develop language skills; to give support to learners; to motivate and encourage them. The focus was not only on the learners, but also on how I taught them and the approaches I used in the classroom.

Elliot (1991) points out that the process of working towards a practical solution to improve a situation, is of interest to the researcher and is as important as the product. My aim was to critically analyse my teaching of comprehension strategies and discover to what extent the learners had benefited.

3.4 Research site and sampling

My participants for the intervention were grade 8 learners in the school where I teach, which is situated in a rural area. The school made a suitable site for my research as I had access to the learners at any time. Also my programme suited them as they had a problem in understanding English texts and had limited exposure to English at school and in the community. I wanted to find out how effective the programme of teaching comprehension strategies in such a situation could be. Also I used a language teacher from my school to observe my teaching (the non-participant observer).

The whole class participated in the intervention. I made use of purposive sampling to select those students who I would focus on for purposes of data collection (e.g. to interview); I selected 6 learners based on their abilities (2 strong learners; 2 average learners and 2 weak learners). Singleton, Straits, Straits and McAllister (1988) state that purposive sampling is entirely based on the judgment of the researcher, in that the sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristics of typical attributes of the population.

3.5 Data collection

McNiff (2002) states that action research cannot be based on opinions. Once the purpose and focus of the research has been identified, it is important to consider what data will be used to validate the research and how this can be obtained. Data collected in this research was related to the teaching of comprehension strategies that could improve Grade 8 learners' reading comprehension skills. To collect the data, I used the following: a colleague for non-participant observation, a research diary/journal, worksheets completed by learners, learners' reflections at the end of each lesson, interviews with six learners which were tape recorded, and questionnaires. All the data collected has been stored in a file.

3.5. 1 Non-participant observation

McNiff (2002) states that a critical friend is someone whose opinion you value and who is able to critique your work and help you see it in a new light. A critical friend helps one to evaluate the quality of the research. Schmuck (2009) states that "observation is a means of attentively watching and systematically recording what is seen and heard" (p. 52). Murray-Thomas (2003) defines observation as gathering information by means of watching and/or listening to events, then recording occurrences. Observations can be direct, where the researcher immediately sees or hears what is happening or they can be mediated, when the researcher hears/sees a reproduction of an earlier event. Observations can be directed by the questions the researcher is attempting to answer. Questions guiding the observer's attention can range from general to specific.

The colleague was expected to be present in the classroom but not to take part in any activity, except keeping a watchful eye on what was happening. He had to base his observation on:

- What the lesson was about
- What the learners were doing
- What the teacher was doing
- What went well and what did not go well
- What needed to be improved

3.5.2 Interviews

I used interviews to collect data from the non-participant observer and the small group of six learners. Johnson and Christensen (2004) state that "an interview is an interpersonal encounter, where the interviewer has to establish rapport with the interviewee. The interviewer must also be impartial to the responses of the interviewee. The interviewer must try to limit biased research data by obtaining the trust of the interviewee(s) by explaining why the research is being done" (p. 178). Also Hopkins (2008) advises that during an interview the researcher should remain calm and neutral so that participants might understand that there is no right or wrong answer in the discussion.

The interview questions were planned beforehand. The first questions were general with the purpose of establishing rapport between the participants and myself. I also wanted to know them better. The questions addressed issues of age and where the learners came from. Those questions were asked to put learners ease and familiarize learners with the environment so that it could be easy for the interview to take place. Further questions were based on the lesson units carried out in the classroom (i.e. strategies of reading comprehension).

I used face to face interviews with my participants and semi-structured questions were used (see appendix 5 for the non-participant observer and appendix 4 for focus group). MacDowell (2001) states that the best place to interview people is where they feel comfortable and where there are good conditions for recording sound. It must be a place where people are familiar with the surroundings. The familiarity of the location puts an interviewee at ease.

To provide a conducive environment, the school library was used as it is a place that is neatly arranged and learners can sit comfortably. I chose that environment in order to create a social relationship with my participants and communicate freely, as interviews should be relaxed and remain neutral. The learners were interviewed in *isiXhosa* although at times we mixed it with English. That was done in order for learners to feel free to express themselves. Also with my colleague I used both languages so as to get rich information and more clarity.

When recording the interviews I used a tape recorder, which made it possible for the interview to move smoothly without any interruption. I had sufficient time and was able to listen carefully to each learner and ask more probing questions. When a learner spoke softly I had a chance of asking him/her to repeat what he/she said more loudly. The recorded interview gave me a chance to replay it.

Both interviews were transcribed and translated so that those who do not understand *isiXhosa* could have an opportunity to read and understand what happened (see appendix4b).

3.5.3 Research diary/journal

3.5.3.1 My personal journal

McNiff and Whitehead (2006) say that "a personal journal acts as a record of events, and also a record of your thinking about those events. It can also act as a piece of evidence to show how actions and thinking change over time" (p. 107).

I kept a personal journal (see appendix 7b) where I reflected and commented on what happened in the classroom. I reflected when learners were doing an activity; I moved among them and recorded what happened in each group. Both positive and negative actions and responses were taken into account during the lesson. I also wrote reflections about the lesson. The journal was a reminder of my observations made in each lesson and it was helpful in making me think about how I should approach the next lesson. My reflections gave me a better understanding of my teaching practices.

3.5.3.2 Learners' journals

Participants were asked to write their journal entries after each session. Williams and Wessel (2004) identify the purpose of reflective journals as being a tool to deepen students' understanding of experiences and to foster thinking skills that actively engage them in learning. Spalding and Wilson (2002) point out the following benefits of journaling:

Journals serve as a permanent record of thoughts and experiences, providing a means of establishing and maintaining relationships with instructors, serving as an outlet for personal concerns and frustrations; and as an aid to internal dialogue (p. 1396).

Learners wrote their journals during the last five minutes of the lesson. They were guided by the following questions:

- How did they feel about their engagement in the activities?
- What did they know as a result of the lesson?

I read the selected learners' journals (2 of the strong learners; 2 average and 2 of the weak learners) which had interesting information that was useful in my research. The learners' journals have been scanned and attached as appendices (see Appendix 7a).

As learners were writing their comments in their journals, I believe that it was one way of serving as an outlet for their personal concerns. Their journals contributed a lot in accumulating data relating to the effectiveness of the intervention results.

3.5.4 Worksheets

Although all learners in Grade 8 used worksheets to do their activities, I used sampling to select evidence of their daily work. This demonstrated to what extent they could use the strategies they had been taught (see Appendix 3a).

3.5.5 Questionnaire

In order for me to get feedback about the lessons, I asked learners to fill in a questionnaire (see Appendix 6a). The questionnaire allowed the learners to comment on the lessons conducted whether positively or negatively. My aim was to get feedback that would help me to improve my teaching practice.

3.6 Validity

Maxwell (1992) points out that ensuring validity consists of the strategies to identify and try to rule out any threats to the validity of the study (p. 106). Cohen et al (2000) state that validity in qualitative research might be addressed through honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data obtained and the participants approached (p. 105).

The utilization of various methods of gathering data was used to strengthen the evidence. Data was collected through my personal research journal, learners' journals, worksheets, interviews and questionnaires. This provided data in different forms from different perspectives. Patton (1980) said that "validity depends on how data is used by the researcher

and the participants to see whether changes in practice have occurred or whether there has been an improvement in practice" (p.484).

The use of interviews and questionnaires with my participants (i.e. learners and a colleague) intensified the validity of my study as they aimed to elicit more detailed information and to balance the evidence. The interview transcripts were given to participants for validation before the information was used in the report, where learners pointed out mistakes that were rectified. Getting such a wealth of information from the participants, together with my honest reflection on my practice, contributed to the validity of my study.

The participants were given a choice of the language they preferred during the interview and they preferred *isiXhosa*. This validated the data, as they were able to voice out their ideas freely. The data gathered was transcribed accurately and the learners' journals were typed (see Appendix 7a). Also the actual words of the participants were used.

Since this study is a self-reflective practice that aimed at personal growth and development, my honest reflections from the beginning of the intervention to the end validated my study.

3.7 Data analysis

Data was analysed from the initial stages throughout the research process using the research journal, a colleague, worksheets, interviews and questionnaires. After gathering relevant information from various sources (as mentioned above) I repeatedly read them to identify the themes. Further, I also looked at unexpected input from learners and reported on this in data analysis and in my journal, as Koshy (2005) recommends that when analysing data it is important to examine unexpected outcomes and report them (p. 109).

The analysis of the data was based on each lesson unit using the following questions:

1. What went well and what did not go well? How can this be explained?
2. How did learners feel about engaging in the activities?
3. What was the learners' progress i.e. what did they know?
4. In order to plan forward, what had I learnt from what happened?

These questions highlighted a true reflection of what happened in the classroom. They gave me a chance to critically analyse and evaluate my teaching practice and think constructively within the situation.

3.8 Ethical issues

As a researcher I have a responsibility to ensure that my research is ethical: that it is carried out with respect towards persons, respect towards democratic values and respect for the quality of educational research (Bassey, 1995; BERA, 2005). Also McNiff (2002) stated that ethical issues are addressed through negotiating access (for example, writing of a letter to the principal and the SGB), promising confidentiality, keeping good faith and assuring the right to information.

During school opening in January 2011, I had a meeting with my principal informing him about the nature of my study and highlighted its purpose. He gave me permission to write a letter addressed to the principal and the SGB on which parents are represented. The SGB and the principal responded positively. Copies of letters requesting consent are attached as appendices to my thesis (appendix 1a and 1b).

I also informed the Grade 8 learners in the classroom what my research was about and explained to them that its purpose was to improve both their comprehension skills and my teaching practice. All learners were expected to participate as the research was conducted during school lesson times. I also wrote a letter to my principal asking for permission to conduct group interviews during study period.

Ethical issues demanded that participants must be protected and respected. In all the permission letters to the principal and the SGB and during the interviews, the participants were informed that the name of the school, the name of the learners and the non-participant observer would be protected. Their names would not be revealed either in the thesis or at any time subsequently. I assured them of anonymity and confidentiality.

I engaged myself in a social relationship with my participants in order to have open communication with them so that we could develop a relationship of partnership and trust.

3.9 Limitations

The lack of training in proper skills on teaching comprehension strategies when I was a student teacher, was the limitation that the research sought to overcome. There was a total neglect of strategies for teaching comprehension on my part. The NCS introduced strategies but I was not trained how to teach those strategies. Although, I learned a substantial amount during the research, I still have more to learn.

Also the lack of dictionaries among learners during the first part of the cycle posed a serious challenge during lesson presentation (this is reported in chapter 4). This challenge made me better understand the learning needs of the learners.

I had a technical challenge in the transcription of interviews; some learners were inaudible, which resulted in omitting important data which could have been beneficial to the research. I had to interview the learners a second time so that I could hear their response. Because I was not able to video record classroom interaction during the lessons, I missed capturing the non-verbal communication which could have given me a true reflection of the process of communication.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the reader with the methodological choices made in this action research project. I explained action research and showed how appropriate it is for my professional development as a teacher. I described the tools I used for data collection which are: my research journal, the learners' journals, a colleague (as a non-participant), interviews that were tape recorded and questionnaires. I also discussed the sampling of learners for data collection purposes. The validity as well as ethical issues were discussed in this research. Lastly, the chapter showed the limitations of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of data collected during the action research project. I also report on the outcomes of the programme, what they reveal about learners' ability to cope with the curriculum and the influence of the research on my teaching.

I begin the chapter by providing an outline of the lessons; presenting the baseline test results and then discussing how this informed the intervention.

4.2 Outline of lessons

Table 1

Lesson	Focus of Lesson	Activities in lesson	Time used For Activities
Baseline assessment	Comprehension test (25 marks)	*done by all learners	50 minutes
Lesson 1 (Day 1 & 2)	Vocabulary development: using dictionary to find the meaning of words	*Opening (question & answers) *Revision of dictionary skills - using copies of a dictionary page *Worksheet: identify words not understood (See Appendix 3a) Journal writing	5 minutes 20 minutes 20 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 1 (Day 3)	Surveying (skimming & scanning)	teaching skimming & scanning; where to focus - e.g. first and last paragraph *teacher modeled focusing on the title *Worksheet: apply surveying, focus on the first and last paragraph (See Appendix 3 a) Journal writing	20 minutes 25 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 1 (Day 4)	Summary writing	*Teach steps on how to summarize *Worksheet: write summary (See Appendix 3 a) Journal writing	20 minutes 25 minutes 5 minutes

Lesson 2 (Day1) (Repeated lesson 1)	Vocabulary development: using vocabulary learned in lesson 1	*Opening: Revision of dictionary skills *Read aloud the passage and explain phrases that are not clear *Worksheet: write simple sentence using vocabulary Journal writing	5 minutes 20 minutes 20 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 2 (Day 2)	Practice in surveying	*done orally *Worksheet: write what they understood in the first and the last paragraph Journal writing	20 minutes 25 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 2 (Day 3)	Practice in summary writing	*Done on the chalkboard *Worksheet: write summary in point form *Groups presenting * Journal writing	15 minutes 25 minutes 10 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 3 (Day 1)	Vocabulary development: learning and using new vocabulary	*opening: revision of dictionary skills *read aloud a new passage and explain phrases *Worksheet: i) write meaning of words using glossary ii) write own simple sentences and read them to other group members * Journal writing	5 minutes 15 minutes 20 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 3 (Day 2)	Surveying	*Worksheet: survey the first and the last paragraph and give feedback * Journal writing	25 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 3 (Day 3)	Summarizing	*Re-read the passage making use of the glossary * Worksheets: write summary in point form using guiding questions *presentation by groups * Journal writing	15 minutes 20 minutes 10 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 4 (Day 1)	Surveying	*Opening: Question & answers on topic of abuse *Read aloud the passage & explain *Worksheet: apply survey strategy looking at the first & last paragraph (See Appendix 3 a)	5 minutes 20 minutes 20 minutes

		* Journal writing	5 minutes
Lesson 4 (Day 2)	Vocabulary development: using vocabulary	*Worksheet: matching words and meaning without using dictionary & peer marking *Using dictionaries for corrections (See Appendix 3 a) * Journal writing	25 minutes 20 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 4 (Day 3)	Summary writing	*Learners re-read the passage quietly *Worksheet: write summary using own words & the teacher gives feedback using chalkboard (See Appendix 3a) * Journal writing	20 minutes 25 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 5 (Day1)	Surveying	*Opening *Read aloud passage from Natural Science entitled 'Bird beaks and bird food' *Worksheet: do surveying focusing on the meaning of 'adaptation'; title; the first and last paragraph (See Appendix 3a) Journal writing	5 minutes 20 minutes 20 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 5 (Day 2)	Vocabulary development: using vocabulary	*Worksheet: match words with their meanings (See Appendix 3a) *marking of task *corrections done using dictionary Journal writing	45 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 5 (Day 3)	Summarizing	*Model how to summarize using table form *Worksheet: write summary using table form (See Appendix 3 a) Journal writing	25 minutes 25 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 6 (Day 1)	Surveying	*Opening *Read aloud passage from Human Social Sciences -explaining terms & phrases *Worksheet: write what you understand about the title; first and the last paragraph	5 minutes 20 minutes 20 minutes

		Journal writing NB: during study period learners prepared their vocabulary cards	5 minutes
Lesson 6 (Day 2)	Vocabulary development: using vocabulary cards	*Learners work in pairs - exchange their cards and ask each other meaning of *An example shown on the worksheet (See Appendix 3a) Journal writing	25 minutes 5 minutes
Lesson 6 (Day3)	Summarizing	*Read aloud again *Model summarizing using table form on the chalkboard *Worksheet: write summary using table form *Sharing ideas * Journal writing	25 minutes 25 minutes 5 minutes
Post-intervention assessment	Comprehension test (30 marks)	*Done by all learners	50 minutes

4.3 Analysis of the baseline assessment

After conducting the baseline assessment (see Appendix 3a), this was marked. The results are shown in the table below. The marks were out of 25 and have been converted to percentages so that a comparison with the post-intervention assessment is possible.

Table 1: Comprehension test

Text 1

Highest mark	Median mark	Lowest mark	Average mark
48%	28%	0%	25.3%

The test assessed understanding of written English language. The highest score was 12/25= 48%. The mark reflects that none of the learners had a good understanding of the meaning the text. The median mark was 7/25=28%, this mark reflects that majority of the learners read the text with very little understanding at all. The learner with the lowest mark reflects that this

learner either did not understand the questions or did not even read them hence the learner scored 0/25=0%. The results presented above showed that a lot of work needed be done with grade 8's. What was also revealed was the learners' slow pace in reading the text.

4.4 Results of focus group interviews - access and attitudes towards reading in English

I chose six learners as my focus group, who I interviewed and asked to complete questionnaires. I selected them according to their abilities: 2 stronger learners, 2 average learners and 2 weaker learners. Since the learners had a limited English vocabulary, the questionnaire asked them in which language they most liked to read. Four learners indicated that they read in *isiXhosa* (see Appendix 6a).

During the focus group interview, the following interaction took place:

Educator: Before we go any further I would like to know whether you like English or not? Do you like being taught in English or you learn it because you have no choice?

Learner: I don't like English. I learn it because I have no choice. The language I like is *isiXhosa* because in order to pass to the next grade you need to pass it.

This suggests that some learners might be somewhat more positively oriented towards *isiXhosa* than English.

4.5 Analysis of the lessons

In the sections that follow below I describe and analyse each lesson in turn, drawing on my records of what happened in the lessons, the learners' writing, the learners' reflections, my own reflections and the observations of the non-participant observer.

4.5.1 Lesson 1 (Day 1 & 2) - Strategies for understanding vocabulary 4.5.2

Preparation, activities and resources

Before I introduced the reading comprehension strategies to the learners, I revised dictionary skills: guide words, pronunciation, definition and spelling were clarified, as these were essential in preparation for the strategy of developing vocabulary. I gave learners each a copy of a dictionary page since there were not enough dictionaries available. I also gave learners a text (appendix 3b) that was taken from a grade 9 textbook (Dawson, 1995), which was used for both lesson 1 and 2. Lesson 1 had a vocabulary focus using dictionaries. The learners were asked to identify words not

understood and look up their meaning from the dictionaries. In the table below I provide an analysis of the words not understood:

Table 2

Words not understood	No of learners	Percentages (%) Of learners who did not understand the words
Accompanies	8	11.4%
Supply	8	11.4%
Equipment	7	10%
Annual	6	8.6%
Obtain	6	8.6%
Trails	5	7.1%
Warden	5	7.1%
Various	5	7.1%
Kruger National Park	4	5.7%
Tourists	4	5.7%
Game ranger	3	4.3%
Probably	3	4.3%
Travel	2	2.8%
Rest camps	2	2.8%
Explains	1	1.4%
Part	1	1.4%
Permission	1	1.4%
Their	1	1.4%

4.5.3 Commentary and reflection

The information in Table 2 above suggests that some learners had poor vocabulary knowledge in English, since they did not understand some fairly high frequency words. This led to them not understanding what they read. Their reading pace was very slow because they read word by word, indicating a reading problem. Also they were not used to working according to time. In our school we have no wall clocks in the classrooms and the learners have no watches, so they are reliant on the teacher telling them how many minutes are left to finish the task. The lack of these resources in the classrooms (i.e. grade 8 classes) played a significant role in the slow pacing of the lesson. In addition, a shortage of resources impacted on pacing. In one class, there were only four learners who brought dictionaries from home, in another only five. I had to take my dictionary and the two dictionaries from the office so that each group could have a copy. Learners were noisy and quarreled over the dictionaries. That factor alone, i.e. lack of dictionaries, contributed to the slow pace, which caused the lesson to overlap into the second day. The non-participant observer commented:

There can't be vocabulary enrichment without consulting a dictionary. You are heading for a big problem; the learners will never finish the task in one day (see Appendix 5a).

After reflecting on this problem, I talked with the principal and persuaded him to buy dictionaries for the school from the school fund. I had to go to Jet Mart to check the prices of dictionaries which I found reasonable. A copy of the *Oxford dictionary for learners* was R35.99.

Apart from the challenges we had in the classroom, learners were interested in the lesson. One learner commented in her reflection:

The story was interesting and I understood the words because I had a dictionary (see Appendix 4b).

Also learners grouped around the learners who had dictionaries to see for themselves the meaning of words and to feel the touch of a dictionary. They were motivated and saw the value of having a dictionary; that one could increase one's vocabulary by using it. The non-participant observer commented:

Although most learners have no dictionaries they showed interest in what they were doing because they grouped around the ones who had dictionaries to look for the meaning of words themselves (see Appendix 5a).

The non-participant observer's comment prompted me to devise a glossary that would help the learners when dealing with vocabulary skills in the next lesson.

4.5.4 Lesson 1 Day 3 - Surveying (skimming and scanning)

Learners worked in groups; they were asked to think about the first and the last paragraph of the text and discuss what they understood. In each group there was a strong learner positioned strategically to help the weaker learners. Because they had a problem with English language, they used *isiXhosa* when discussing. Using *isiXhosa* during discussion was not advantageous to the weaker learners because they did not take part in the reporting back process, and therefore did not get an opportunity to practice and improve their English.

However, as the learners worked in groups, I was amazed to see the group leaders in some groups delegating other learners to write down their own sentences; and then each learner read his/her ideas to the whole group. On reflection, I wrote in my journal:

- *As some learners were not contributing in their groups, the group leaders mandated other learners to write their own sentences and read them to the group (see Appendix 7a).*

That encouraged each learner to speak; there was no chance to hide. I learnt something new from the learners that they had capabilities that needed to be strengthened. Although, the lesson was time-consuming and some learners were still slow, I learned much from it.

4.5.5 Lesson 1 Day 4 - Summarizing

Learners worked in groups again. I told the groups to adopt the method I saw working well in some groups on Day 3 of Lesson 1, to ensure that every member of the group contributed. However, despite the preparation and familiarity with the text, learners could not identify key ideas. They were unable to write sentences in their own words due to lack of vocabulary and they opted to write direct quotes. For instance, in Worksheet 1 learners were asked:

Summarize each paragraph in a short sentence and write what is important. The learners' responses were:

- *Each year James father travels to different Game Park.*
- *It is important to obey the rules of the Game Park and his father had to obtain special permission from the Warden before he can go into the bush, (see Appendix 3a).*

This reflects a lack of understanding of summary writing. Learners could not identify what was important in the text or try to use their own words when writing their sentences. They found summary writing very difficult and needed more scaffolding and more time to practice. Scaffolding each group was time consuming, and on reflection, I think it would have been better for me to scaffold the activity for the whole class using the chalkboard, in the first instance. Pacing was still a problem for the learners.

4.5.6 Lesson 2 Day 1: Vocabulary development: - using vocabulary

I still used the same text as in Lesson 1 for all the activities in Lesson 2.

Learners used the same text as in Lesson 1, but I changed the method we used to develop vocabulary. Learners had to work individually within a group; they were given a list of words to use in writing their own sentences and then share them in their groups. The glossary was given to learners without dictionaries. The sentences of some learners were of poor quality. For example:

- *My teacher asked me at what i to be when im' old and i said "i want to be a photographer" (see Appendix 3a).*

The learner's sentence shows lack of understanding of sentence structure although the word 'photographer' was used correctly in last part of the sentence. This sentence led me to revise sentence structure with the learners using the chalkboard.

The pace of the lesson increased; it might be the fact that learners were familiar with text and that they had glossaries. It could be that there was a clear distribution of tasks and everyone was involved. In my reflection I wrote:

- *Learners were actively involved today; maybe it was because we repeated the lesson using the same text. They seemed to know the story better and the response was positive (see Appendix 7b).*

The learners were very tolerant of each other, suggesting that they had accepted working as a group.

4.5.7 Lesson 2 Day 2 - Surveying (skimming and scanning)

Learners were actively involved in their task, still working in groups focusing on the first and the last paragraph of the text, but writing their sentences individually and then sharing them. Some groups were fast except a group of boys that was slow. Average learners contributed a lot, and the activity seemed to build up their confidence. However, although they were familiar with the text, the feedback session revealed that their sentences were still of poor quality. Learners were asked to write what they understood in paragraph 1, a response of a learner was:

- *he tells us about the game Ranger when he go with his father in a holiday*

I think I should have modeled the strategy of surveying by doing many examples for the class on the chalkboard before they did an activity. During the activity, I should have monitored the learners and given them feedback. Despite the fact that learners were shown the sentence structure, the weaker learners continued to write poor sentences. Regarding the group of boys, I thought of mixing them with girls in the next lesson.

4.5.8 Lesson 2 Day 3 - Summarizing

I started this lesson by re-arranging the group of boys and mixing them with girls. Since the learners were by now familiar with the text, their pace in this lesson was much better. In some groups their sentences were meaningful although they still struggled to use their own words. What made me happy was to see that they were able to identify what was important. Even the report back was better. In my reflection I wrote:

- */ think using the same text had a positive impact to learners. They were free to share their idea. (see Appendix 7b)*

Also the non-participant observer commented:

- */ liked the fact that you used the same comprehension text so that learners get to know and understand the text. (see appendix 5a)*

I also noticed that the group leaders worked too much for their groups as they were also scribes. This meant that the learners who were getting most practice in reading, writing and speaking English, were those who were already fairly competent. In this way, the gap between the weak and strong learners could widen. I realized that learners had to learn to share responsibility and the position of being a scribe had to rotate.

4.5.9 Lesson 3: Day 1 vocabulary development - using a dictionary and using vocabulary in sentences

Learners were given a new text (see appendix 3b) which was taken from a grade 9 textbook (Dawson; 1995). The text was used to teach all the strategies in lesson 3. On day 1, the focus was on developing vocabulary: i) using dictionaries/glossaries; ii) using vocabulary in sentences. I prepared a glossary for learners to use in the task given, and those who had dictionaries used them. The non-participant observer commented:

- *This is a brilliant idea continue with it as long as they don't have dictionaries and the school hasn't yet bought the dictionaries. (see Appendix 5a)*

Although learners had glossaries, some did not use them; they disturbed those who had dictionaries. They thought that what was in the glossary was not the same as that in the dictionary. Their pace was slow because they had to share a dictionary and some came up with wrong meanings. For example, a learner gave a meaning of '*Mustered*' instead of '*Muttering*'. It might be the learner did not double check the spelling of the word or the learner still had a problem with the alphabet. This left me with a task of constantly reminding the learners to double check their spelling before writing. Others used the glossary fruitfully and managed to finish on time the easy task they were given.

ii) In the activity in which learners used the new vocabulary, some learners wrote good sentences. Here are some examples of positive responses on worksheet 3:

- *David's family has a bad reputation in my village.*
- *He came to alert them about the war.*
- *Unathi and I were muttering when we heard that the caretaker is coming.*
- *Every Monday there is an assembly at my school.* (see Appendix 3 a)

Some were unable to write their own sentences but rather selected sentences from the passage. Again I suspect it was their lack of vocabulary and their limited English that made them unable to write sentences on their own. Here are their examples:

- *Get everybody out make no exception.*
- *The panic in my voice soon spread round the dormitory.*

The weaker learners wrote the meanings of words again instead of sentences. For example:

- *A big bedroom for a lot of people.*
- *A situation in which everything is confused and nothing is organized.* (see Appendix 3 a)

These learners were unable to think and come up with sentences although they had the meanings of words. The lack of exposure and vocabulary in English is their biggest problem. To counteract this problem I gave them simple English books from the library to read and every Friday during cleaning time they would tell me about the story they read in English. In my reflection I wrote:

- *I had to give the weaker learners English story books to try and alleviate the problem.* (see Appendix 7b)

Since the learners were working on a new text, their pace was slow.

4.5.10 Lesson 3: Day 2 Surveying (skimming and scanning)

During surveying (skimming and scanning) learners were still seated in groups but worked individually and then shared their ideas with the group. The pace of some groups increased, since they were now familiar with the text. Some learners seemed to understand surveying. The learners' reflections were as follows:

- *I like it I've done exactly what has been told. to me its easier.it is the easiest way to understand a comprehension.*
- *Survey showed me how to have a general idea of comprehension.*
- *We were taught how to survey and the story was simple so it was easy to get to know what the story is about. (see Appendix 7a)*

Some groups had learners who were slow readers and that caused them not to finish on time. In as much as there were groups that improved, some still produced poor quality of work. The weaker learners needed more attention as it was hard for them to understand the text and identify key words. Here is an example of a weaker learner's response on surveying the first paragraph:

- *My name is James Banda and arrived from Malawi in few days ago.*
(see Appendix 3 a)

The sentence shows how difficult the activity was for the weaker learners.

4.5.11 Lesson 3: Day 3 Summarizing

Learners had to summarize using guiding questions. Some responded positively to these questions. They were able to select main points. Some learners were able to write short sentences with meaning, but some were still writing long sentences. I think using guiding questions can be of help to learners when summarizing. During their discussion learners were free to talk whether they said something correct or not. They had gained confidence. A learner in his reflection said:

- *The comprehension is not difficult I need to learn to write short sentences (see Appendix 7a).*

I think before learners embarked on the activity on summary writing, I should have scaffolded the whole class using the chalkboard, showing them how to get rid of unnecessary words when summarizing.

On the other hand, there were still learners who were battling to identify main ideas in the passage. They could not understand the text or the questions, and as a result they were not participating in their groups. The non-participant observer commented:

- *There were learners who did not participate who were difficult, ask them more questions until they develop a good attitude that a question can be posed to them and an answer is expected (see Appendix 5a).*

This comment caused me to devise another strategy in the next lesson that would cause the learners to participate. I had to dissolve groups and each learner had to work individually.

4.5.12 Lesson 4: Day 1 Surveying (skimming and scanning)

The text used in Lesson 4 (Appendix 3b) was taken from (Reading level 1 of START, 1995). The learners at this juncture worked individually. Most learners found the story easy and understandable. They managed to grasp the meaning of the first and the last paragraph and their pace increased. However, some learners still had problems with pacing and writing sentences in their own words. For example on Worksheet 4 on surveying a learner wrote:

- *The fall guy's father had an injury on his foot and that made him angry.*
- *The fall guy started a new life where he had peace at last and what his father did to him, he will never do it to his son. (see Appendix 3a)*

These sentences were taken from the text as they were. They were not modified at all.

During this lesson, dictionaries were made available; the school had bought 35 copies.

4.5.13 Lesson 4: Day 2 Vocabulary development - using vocabulary

Still using the same text, the task was done individually with no assistance from other learners. The aim was to train learners to work independently and demonstrate how much they had attained from working in groups. The learners attempted their individual task on vocabulary development, matching words with their meanings, but there were a few learners who found it difficult to work alone. During the second interview, a learner commented:

- *It was difficult when you separated us. It was not easy but I got used to that (see Appendix 4c).*

Most learners were focused on their task as matching words was a new method introduced to them. A learner reflected:

- *The activity was interesting. I like to think which meaning for this word if I got it wrong then I will look it's meaning from a dictionary. (see Appendix 7a)*

The non-participant observer commented:

- */ think this is a good approach because it stimulates thinking. I observed that they were quiet and thinking trying to relate a word with its meaning. I think you can use this approach frequently. (see Appendix 5b)*

The strong and average learners made few mistakes which showed that they understood the task. In my reflection I wrote:

- *Some were serious about their work. They were clever enough to go back to the comprehension passage and read the sentence where the words were taken from in order to understand/guess their meanings, (see Appendix 7b)*

The learners finished on time but the weaker learners inaccurately matched the words without giving any thought to this. Dictionaries were issued for them to check the meaning of words and write their corrections. The availability of dictionaries made learners work faster.

4.5.14 Lesson 4: Day 3 Summarizing

Most learners had gained confidence, and they grasped how to write a summary. Their sentences were good and short. Some were able to identify key ideas from the text, but their sentences were still long. They could not focus on those key ideas but tended to explain them.

Here are some responses of learners on Worksheet 4 - summary writing:

- *The fall guy was hated by his father.*
- *His father took him out of school.*
- *The fall guy was accused for everything wrong that happened at home.*
- *The fall guy and his father did not have a good relationship because his father was always angry because of his injury.*

The weaker ones wrote their sentences in poor English. For example:

- *The father and the son relationship is, i think the father hart is son because always hit him and get out of school.*
- *My father is fight of the son because parent do not want me.*
- *Whipped me my father felt like I wanted*

During the activities in lesson 4, I tried to ask as many learners to report what they had written so that they could participate in the lesson.

4.5.15 Lesson 5: Day 1 Surveying (skimming and scanning)

The text (appendix 3b) was again taken from (Reading Level 1 of START, 1995). The text was about 'Bird beaks and bird food'. Some learners were interested in the passage, more especially boys, but others were not. Apart from their attitudes towards the text, they learnt to take the strategies seriously because they could see that they could be applied in all learning areas. Most learners were able to survey the text while the weaker learners were grappling with the new text which again caused their pace to slow down. In their sentences some words were not completed and some words were misspelt. For example in Worksheet 5 (Bird beaks and bird food):

1. What is the meaning of adaptation?
 - *to change the way thayou do things because you are in a new situatio*
2. What do you think is the reason for the writer to give the title of this passage 'Bird beaks and bird food'?
 - *I think it is a need of bird that bird can not leve weth out them.*

4.5.16 Lesson 5: Day 2 Vocabulary development - using vocabulary

Learners were now familiar with the routine of the programme. During vocabulary development they quickly embarked on their task. I repeated the method of matching words with their meanings as the non-participant observer commented that the approach '*stimulates thinking*'. The learners worked fast, did their marking and their corrections. A learner reflected:

- *I am used to match the words its not that difficult (see Appendix 7a)*

In my reflection, I wrote:

- *I have noticed that if I repeat the method in any lesson, the learners work freely and with confidence because they are used to the approach, (see Appendix 7b)*

The average learners had improved a lot and they were focused. However, the weaker learners showed no improvement in vocabulary development. They still matched words without thinking. For example:

Extract from worksheet 5

1. habitat	Birds mouth
2.wild	Dead flesh 1
3. site	Sweet liquid produced by flowers 4
4.beak	Living area 3
5. prey	A pocket of skin in some animals 2

Since the weaker learners did not have enough practice in speaking English, I thought of introducing the learners to vocabulary cards where they would work in pairs asking each other the meaning of words. By so doing, learners would get practice in speaking English.

4.5.17 Lesson 5: Day 3 Summarizing

On Day 3 learners were introduced to a table form of summary writing. Most learners found the table form much easier than writing sentences in point form. The use of columns made it easier for them to see where to fit in relevant information. It was structured and straightforward. Many learners finished on time. Here are learners' reflections:

- *We used table form and it was good.*
- *The table form make summary simple.*

- *I found table form simple than summarizing using sentences. (see Appendix 7a)*

However, the weaker learners were unable to identify sentences that described the beaks of the birds.

4.5.18 Lesson 6: Day 1 Surveying (skimming and scanning)

The extract was taken from a Grade 8 Human Social Science textbook (Birkenstock and Gardner, 2006). The learners had to apply the surveying strategy. The text had some difficult words but some learners managed to derive the meaning of the title, the first and the last paragraph. The weaker learners strove to finish on time but their sentences showed that they did not understand the text. For example: **an extract from worksheet 6**

What do you understand about:

a) The title:

- *The understand the Nazi to the comas capital letters to vertical commas very understand.*

b) The first paragraph:

- *People in Germany want one people to solve promblems people in Germany want solutions.*

During study period, the learners prepared their vocabulary cards and started to read them. They were also told to read the cards at home as their homework.

4.5.19 Lesson 6: Day 2 Vocabulary development - using vocabulary

The learners used vocabulary cards during vocabulary development. They were given five vocabulary cards to keep with five words and their meanings. Learners were given homework to read the vocabulary cards at home. In the classroom they worked in pairs asking each other the meaning of words. Learners were interested because the activity was like a game to them.

Some learners knew the words and their meanings, but some had a poor memory; they twisted the meaning of words. The activity gave all the learners a chance to think in and speak English. In my reflection I wrote:

- *Learners were cooperative and they had fun. They were relaxed, laughing at each other during the activity; and what was exciting was to see them speaking English. Even the weaker ones were trying their best although they seemed to forget the meaning of other words. (see Appendix 7b)*

4.5.20 Lesson 6: Day 3 Summarizing

Learners did summary writing using the table form again. All the learners finished their task on time even the weaker learners. They had become accustomed to this kind of summary writing as they found it much easier than the previous one. The majority could easily identify the event that happened in the story and the year in which it happened. During feedback they were willing to share their ideas showing confidence. In my reflection, I wrote:

- *Most learners found tabulating much easier and they finished the task on time. They were free to share their idea. (see Appendix 7b)*

An extract during second interview:

Q: when I introduced you to a tabulating as a form of summary writing, did you understand it?

L: I liked it, it is better than writing those sentences.

L: Those columns made it easy to see where each point fits, (see Appendix 4c)

The weaker learners also tried to identify a few points but missed others. The spelling of some of the weaker learners was still poor. For example:

Extract from worksheet 6

Year	Person/people/country	Event
e.g. 1914	Germany	There was social, economic and political chaos

1919	Hitler	There was an opportunity part that would solve the problem
1935	Germany	Nuremberg became the centre of the Nazi party in the 1930s
1939	Jewish people	Had to register all property that they owned with the Nazi party

4.5.21 Analysis of Post-Intervention Assessment

After the programme had been completed, the learners were assessed again using a comprehension test (see Appendix 3d). The results are shown in the table below. The test was marked out of 30; the results have been converted to percentages to allow a comparison with the baseline assessment.

Table 3: Comprehension test

Text 2

Highest mark	Median mark	Lowest mark	Average mark
70%	46.6%	16.6%	44.4%

The test assessed the learners' reading comprehension in English after they had been taught strategies that could help them read with comprehension. The results demonstrated better comprehension of the text in the case of the strong learners and average learners. In the 1st test: a strong learner scored 12/25 = 48%; in the 2nd test a strong learner scored 21/30 = 70% and the difference was 38%; while the median mark in the 1st test was 7/25 = 28%; 2nd test the median mark was 14/30 = 46.6% and the difference was 18.6%. Some learners had improved their understanding of English language. Also there was a slight improvement even for the weaker learners when compared with the first results where the lowest mark was 0%. The weakest learner moved from 0% to 16.6%. Their problem lay in their slow reading; and not understanding the language or the questions. In questions that needed explanation and

their own views few managed, they gave very short answers. Apart from that some learners managed to finish the test, some did not.

4.6 Themes that emerged from the analysis of data

I will now discuss themes that emerged from the analysis of data collected during the intervention.

4.6.1 Pacing

I found that initially the learners controlled the pacing, and they held me back in achieving what I had intended during the time period of a lesson. It was particularly the weaker learners who could not keep up with the intended pace of the lesson because of their poor knowledge of English and weak reading ability. The learners had not been taught to time themselves, and as a result they could not self regulate their own pace when working in groups. Furthermore, the learners had no tools to do so i.e. they did not have watches and there was no clock in the classroom. Clearly, there is a relationship between the availability of tools and the possibility of learning to self-regulate pacing. The school does have a timetable and the bell is rung at the end of each lesson, but that was not consistently applied. Thus, the need to attend to time was not consistently modeled. For instance, there were disruptions to the timetable on Wednesdays when school was interrupted by sports activities. Initially, the lack of resources like dictionaries also slowed the pace down because learners had to wait until they could borrow a dictionary. Also the learners' lack of knowledge about comprehension strategies contributed to the slow pace. This lack of knowledge is illustrated in the following extract from the first interview:

- *Researcher: When I started teaching the strategies of reading comprehension - did you understand or not; or you were confused?*
- *Learner: I was lost because it was the first time being taught these strategies.*
- *Learner: I was confused I had no knowledge of strategies of reading comprehension. (see Appendix 4b)*

According to the NCS, comprehension strategies should be taught from grade 7. The fact that learners entered Grade 8 not having adequately covered the Grade 7 curriculum further retarded the progress of the lesson.

As the lessons progressed, through a process of reflection on action and feedback, it was possible for me to make changes that increased the pace of learning. I talked to the learners about the need to work quickly and keep to time. I also used the same text several times to develop different strategies, which enabled learners especially the weaker ones, to understand the text and read it more fluently. I also established routines with which learners became familiar; this reduced time wastage on giving instructions and explaining tasks.

The use of a glossary and the purchase of dictionaries accelerated the pace. This shows that lack of resources have a negative impact on lessons; it slows down the pacing. In the case of dictionaries, learners had to wait their turn.

4.6.2 Group work

Group work had advantages and disadvantages. Learners were actively engaged in their learning activities. I assigned the learners with stronger literacy in English to be group leaders. On their own initiative, some group leaders delegated tasks to every member of their group. They ensured that everyone participated by calling on the teacher to intervene if any group member refused. I persuaded reluctant learners to participate by explaining that they had to work together as a team. Initially, only the stronger learners were writing, but as the intervention progressed the group leaders ensured that all learners had written tasks. As a result of these processes, leadership skills developed.

I recognized how effective the strategy was when observing some groups, where leaders structured tasks so that learners had to do something individually first and then share their ideas in the group. I therefore encouraged other group leaders to apply this strategy.

When learners worked in groups, their discussion was in *isiXhosa* but the written work and report back was done in English. Although all the learners did some preliminary written work, it was the stronger learners who dominated in the group writing and the report back, which deprived the weaker learners of the opportunity to use English. Because of the group work, the oral language used in the lesson was predominantly *isiXhosa* though written texts were in English. Therefore, learners had limited opportunities to listen to or practice their oral English.

As a teacher I wanted to use English, but found myself code-switching. I explained in English but I was concerned that not all learners understood. I consequently translated key concepts into *isiXhosa*. In my written reflection I wrote:

- *Since I wanted learners to understand I had to code-switch to unlock difficult concepts, making the lesson easier.*

I noted that explaining in both languages seemed to benefit the learners in terms of their understanding of my instructions and explanations. However, it may also have reduced their motivation to try to understand spoken English. It may also have reduced my motivation to simplify my English to the point where it was comprehensible to the learners.

4.6.3 Limited English vocabulary

One of the assumptions on which the research was based was that learners' English vocabulary was poor and impeded their reading comprehension in English, and that they needed strategies to improve this. However, in the course of the research it became clear how lack of vocabulary was for some learners a barrier to understanding and using English at the most basic level. It held back their ability to write in English, for example, in surveying and summarizing; to note key words and paraphrase ideas was difficult for the learners. The weaker learners found this particularly difficult and did not make a great deal of progress. This raises the question of whether the intervention was appropriate for the needs of the weaker learners, or whether they needed to work on vocabulary development and basic English language skills.

However, ensuring that learners each had a dictionary made a difference to the learning of the strong and average learners. They also benefited from working on vocabulary development activities individually and in groups.

4.6.4 The need to provide scaffolding in summary writing

The learners were unfamiliar with summary writing. I therefore had to provide scaffolding, for example by modelling the strategies as learners found it difficult to summarize using sentences. It would have been helpful to have practiced the steps in summary writing, for example, I should have done a number of surveying activities together first as a class before learners attempted to do this on their own. I should have modelled summary sentences until learners felt comfortable with them. This is supported by two learners' reflections on summary writing at the beginning of the intervention:

- *Too difficult I did not know how to put paragraph in small word.*
- *It is difficult at this moment may be it will be easy through the year. I never done summary maybe that's why its difficult. (see Appendix 7a)*

The fact that learners struggled to write short sentences which were meaningful and to find key ideas when summarizing, indicated that they needed support from the teacher. Strategies that worked were, in the first instance, providing guiding questions for summary writing, which helped most learners to have an idea of what to focus on. However, the weaker learners still struggled. When I introduced tabulating, learners found it much easier. On reflection, I should have started with this had I known that learners would respond positively towards it.

4.6.5 The extent to which the weaker learners benefitted from the programme

The weaker learners were motivated, engaged and attempted to participate. However, they were only able to manage the simplest tasks. There were 7 learners who were barely able to manage to read or write in either English or isiXhosa. They needed a different kind of intervention.

Teachers are currently faced with the challenge of having to teach a wide range of abilities. This is a particular problem in Grade 8 since learners enter high school from different feeder schools, with different experiences of learning. There are many factors which contribute to learners entering high school with extremely low levels of literacy, and a discussion of these

is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is important to mention that very few high school teachers are trained in remedial teaching.

4.6.6 My lack of experience of teaching Grade 8

Before embarking on the current research I used to teach Grades 11 and 12 as a result of this, I had to make adjustments when teaching grade 8. I had to watch the level at which I pitched the lesson. The non-participant observer commented after the lesson:

- *You used words like 'predict and brainstorm' and grades 8 's are not familiar with such words. (see Appendix 5a)*

On reflection, the concepts I used might have contributed in causing learners not to grasp the lesson immediately.

What I learnt about teaching Grade 8 was that I should be slower and more direct. I had to do more reading aloud of texts and provide more explanation. I had to give the learners simple instructions, which also needed to be explained, and model more exercises before learners could work individually. However, I also needed to ensure that there was a sufficient level of challenge in the lesson, especially for the stronger learners.

4.7 Coverage of the curriculum prior to entering Grade 8

One of the assumptions at the outset of this research was that learners' level of reading comprehension was not what it should be and that the Grade 7 assessment standards had thus not been achieved. This was borne out in the research intervention.

According to the NCS (2002) Grade(s) R-9, the assessment standards relating to reading and viewing, for Grade 7 doing English First Additional Language demand that these learners:

- Show some understanding of how reference books work
- Use contents page and index to find information;

- Use dictionary; understands dictionary entry (spelling, pronunciation, parts of speech, meaning);
- Use a simple thesaurus, (page 100)

However, in the class I was teaching the majority of learners were unfamiliar with how to use a dictionary. What I encountered were learners who had difficulty in finding the meaning of words. They found it difficult to choose the meaning that fitted well within a sentence or paragraph.

Again, according to the NCS Grades R-9, the Assessment Standards relating to reading and viewing, for Grade 7 learners doing English First Additional Language demand that these learners when reading a text:

- identify main points, (page 96)

However, in the class I was teaching the majority of learners found it extremely difficult to identify the main points in a text.

Again, according to the NCS (2002) Grades R-9, the Assessment Standards relating to language structure and use, for Grade 7 learners doing English First Additional Language demand that these learners:

- To demonstrate an understanding of between 4000 and 5500 common spoken words in context by the end of Grade 7. Learners who will do some of their learning through their additional language should aim for 5500 words. (page 100)

Although I did not test the learners' vocabulary, it was clear from their use of English that it was much lower than the Grade 7 curriculum requires. For example, some of the unknown words written down by learners in Worksheet 1 (activity 1) were within the range of the most common 500 words in English (e.g. their, part, travel) or the first 1,000 words (e.g. supply).

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a critical reflection on each lesson taught drawing evidence from the non-participant observations, learners' journals, researcher's journal, interviews and questionnaires. I focused on the three strategies of reading comprehension: vocabulary skills, surveying (skimming and scanning) and summary writing. I also focused on themes that emerged from the analysis of data. These will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the main themes which emerged in Chapter 4 and how they relate to the literature on the teaching of comprehension strategies in a rural context. I also reflect on some limitations of the study, and what I learnt from it. Finally, I consider how the research could be taken forward, for example, into a further cycle of action research.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 Limited English proficiency of rural learners

The research literature shows that South African learners lack skill in retrieving information from text, as well as interpretive and critical reading of English text (SAQMEC II, 2000; PIRLS, 2006). The main reason for many South African learners' limited proficiency in reading comprehension seems to be lack of literacy in their homes and in their communities. This is said to be “especially true for poor children who get little support for schoolwork from their homes and little intellectual stimulation in their broader social environment” (Taylor, 2008, p.10-11).

Few parents can afford to provide books for their children, thus causing learners, especially those from rural areas, to lose out on the opportunity to learn from their parents how to engage in literate activities. Parents are not always able to develop their children's reading and thinking by asking them questions about texts (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). The majority of school-going children function at home in an oral society which is not text-orientated (Wessels, 2010, p.21). Biemiller (2005 in Konza 2011 p. 5) highlights that:

Children from less literate backgrounds will hear a more restricted range of words; have less access to the vocabulary of books, and will consequently be more likely to have difficulty acquiring the skill of reading. This in turn will mean they have less opportunity to use their own reading skills to develop their vocabulary."

In addition, studies by Mbelani (2007) and Wells (2010) suggest that coverage of the curriculum is poor and that learners have not achieved the outcomes and assessment standards described in the curriculum. Learners who reach grade 8 are still struggling with

English and unable to understand texts recommended for their level. Little seems to be done by schools in rural areas to combat the situation. Before I embark on this research my school was not an exception to this rule. Konza (2011) states that "not all children have the benefit of a language-rich and print-rich environment. These children enter school with disadvantage. They will be further disadvantaged if this is not understood and acknowledged by their school" (p.2).

Krashen (1981) points out that learners need lots of exposure to extensive reading in order to acquire the vocabulary that will allow them to express themselves proficiently. It seems that many see it as solely the responsibility of English teachers to develop learners' English language usage and to provide them with such opportunities for extensive reading.

Students' limited English proficiency contributes to the slow pace of lessons (Mbelani 2007, Wells 2010). Thus a vicious cycle is created: limited English proficiency contributes to slow pacing which prevents curriculum coverage; this in turn holds back learners' development of proficiency in English.

I was aware of the learners' limited proficiency in English before embarking on my study. It was in fact their poor understanding of English texts that provided the motivation for the study. I was, however, unaware of just how severe this problem was.

5.2.2 Pacing of teaching and learning

Hoadley (2003 citing Bernstein, 1990) defines pacing as "the expected rate of acquisition, that is, the rate at which learning is expected to occur" (p. 267). "Pacing is the rhythm and timing of classroom activities or units, which includes the way time is allocated to each classroom component and the process of how one decides that it is the right moment to change to another activity" (Goldsmith, 2009, p. 33).

Pacing is widely recognised as a problem in South African schools (Reeves, 2000). "The growing problem of teacher absenteeism and late coming; learner absenteeism causes schools to be ineffective in teaching and learning" (Taylor, 2008, p.7) Different studies carried out throughout the country have shown that factors related to time and pacing hinder meaningful teaching and learning (Reeves, 2000, p.68). Taylor (2008) refers to the "snail's pace at which teachers progress through the curriculum, sometimes spending a whole lesson reading two or

three sentences. This slow pacing is known to result in “low levels of curriculum coverage over the year” (p, 15). The Department of Basic Education is also aware of the use of time as a key issue in teaching and learning. In its Annual Report, DBE (2011/2012, p.3) acknowledges this through its implementation of the 3Ts - Text, Teacher and Time.

In my study, I identified a number of factors that slowed the pacing of lessons. The learners' limited English proficiency impeded their reading comprehension, thus causing low reading speed. This meant that it took a long time for them to read the passages. Lack of resources such as dictionaries, watches and clocks were also factors. The lack of watches or a classroom clock prevented students from learning how to regulate their use of time. As a result they were particularly slow when working in groups. The initial lack of dictionaries meant students had to wait to use one, which again slowed the lesson down. Poor planning also played a part in the slow pacing of lessons; I did not take sufficient account of pacing when I planned my lessons.

However, by changing a number of aspects of my practice, I found I was able to increase the pace of my lessons. I improved my planning by paying more attention to pacing, and I took action to acquire the necessary resources (for example, making glossaries available at the initial stages of the intervention, and eventually managing to obtain dictionaries). Realising that my learners were challenged by the text, I recycled texts, which enabled students to develop greater fluency and attend more closely to meaning.

I have not yet addressed the question of learners' access to watches and/or a clock so that they can learn to self-regulate their use of time. According to Zimmerman (2002, p, 65-66), "self-regulation is not a mental ability or an academic performance skill; rather it is the self-directed process by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills, and to develop life-long learning skills" (p. 65-66).

Some of the learners have cell phones but they are not allowed to use them in class. I intend to talk to the principal about the possibility of learners being allowed to use these to monitor their use of time. I also intend speaking to parents/guardians about the possibility of buying learners cheap watches. I would like to purchase a clock for the classroom wall, but it is likely that this would be stolen. I therefore intend to request that the school purchase a clock that I can take with me to class.

These findings demonstrate the importance of teacher knowledge and agency. Once a teacher starts addressing the pacing problem, teaching and learning can improve. These findings

were important to me as a teacher, but they also make a contribution to the literature on pacing in South African classrooms.

5.2.3 The teacher's role in the teaching of reading strategies

The literature shows that teachers have a significant role to play in helping their learners overcome barriers to understanding and interpreting text through teaching comprehension skills and strategies clearly and directly (Bouazid and le Roux, 2010). My study helped me identify factors that benefitted most learners when teaching reading strategies. It was necessary, firstly, to give clear instructions, and secondly, to scaffold learners until they were able to work independently. Lipscomb, Swanson and West (2004) state that when learners are scaffolded in any task with an appropriate level of support, they gradually develop control of their work, and are then able to perform the task independently. When I employed scaffolding to teach learners how to summarize, (e.g. using a table form), learners were better able to work independently and with enthusiasm.

Through my study I also discovered the value of group work. The NCS promotes group work as it is seen to enable learners to learn from their peers and clarify their ideas in a non-threatening way. I also discovered the important role LI can play. Barnes (1992) says that it is helpful for learners to sometimes use their main language, because they need to feel safe when exploring ideas (p. 126). Through the use of group work, many of my learners were better able to understand the text as I gave them the freedom to ask questions in their LI.

I have realised how vital it is for teachers to have pedagogic knowledge of the reading process; how to teach reading, and knowledge of reading strategies and how to teach these. As Konza (2011, p.7) points out, teachers “need to become experts in reading instruction”. Wessels (2010) citing the South African National Reading Strategy (2008:8) highlights that many teachers do not know how to teach reading. Teachers don't know how to stimulate reading both inside and outside the classroom. They are not trained to teach it (p. 24). I also noticed how important it is that teachers know how to generate learners' interest and engagement by introducing activities that seem more like games (e.g. vocabulary cards). This action research project contributed to changing my practices, and I benefitted from being forced to reflect on each lesson, and re-planning the next lesson to suit the needs of my learners.

5.2.4 Meeting the needs of very weak learners

This study showed that the teaching of reading strategies assisted the majority of the learners in my class in improving their reading comprehension of English texts. However, there was a small group of very weak learners in the class, mainly boys, who did not appear to have benefitted at all. This is in keeping with the growing concern in South Africa about the achievement of boys, especially with regard to language (Macupe and Hawker, 2013). I was not able to address this problem in the current cycle of action research. The question of how to address the problem is dealt with in Section 5.5 where I discuss possible steps for taking the research forward.

5.3 Limitations of the study

The purpose of action research is not to generalize, so readers cannot generalise from the findings of my study. However, it is possible that other teachers can learn by reflecting on my experience and relating it to their own.

Although this research was planned, there were limitations with regard to my teaching. First, I lacked experience in teaching grade 8, and I could not always judge the level of learners and what would interest them. Secondly, when I embarked on the study, I was not knowledgeable about how to teach the strategies, in particular the strategies for summarizing.

Lastly, time was also a limitation. I was constrained by the fact that only six weeks was available to implement the project and collect data. If I had had more time, I would have been able to achieve more with the students. Also, owing to pressure of time, as I was a part-time student and needed to commence data collection, I was not able to do sufficient reading before embarking on the project.

5.4 What I learned from the study

The main purpose of action research in education is the professional development of the teacher. It is designed to enable the teacher to reflect on and improve her practice.

I learned a number of things from the study. In order for the learners to understand what was taught, I had to be slower and more direct in my teaching. Again I had to do more explanation and give the learners simple instructions. Also, it was helpful if I used the same text for all strategies in each lesson. Since learners had a challenge with regard to summary writing, I had to use more guiding questions. To sum up, I learnt that learners from rural areas need

more scaffolding and encouragement to motivate them.

I learned to be more empathetic and to understand the students' problems. If my tone was too harsh and critical, learners became nervous and were not receptive to feedback. Also I learned that there were good learners who could take responsibility and to whom I could delegate tasks. I realised that many of the learners were eager to learn, if I provided the scaffolding and encouragement.

Finally, I deepened my professional knowledge as an English teacher.

- I developed my knowledge of the reading process and how to teach reading comprehension.
- I learned to reflect on my teaching on a daily basis.
- I acknowledged the importance of thorough planning and researching the topic.
- I had to think about the learners' English language level - the importance of comprehensible input.

5.5 Taking the research forward

Action research is designed to be a continuous process of action and reflection. Problems identified in one cycle become the focus of research in the next cycle. A significant problem that was identified in this cycle was that of weak learners who did not appear to benefit from the teaching of reading strategies. This was despite the implementation of a range of strategies designed to achieve just this objective.

The next cycle of action research should address this problem. The first step should be to assess the reading level of the weak learners. I would estimate that they are reading at an Intermediate Phase level (Grade 4 to 6). It would be important to consult with parents about supporting these learners. Possible ways of supporting them are differentiated teaching methods, combined with texts that are at learners' level and remedial classes in the afternoon. However, it is often difficult to get learners to attend in the afternoons. Teachers need to develop expertise in remedial literacy. A consultation with special schools would assist teachers in developing simpler methods of teaching the weak learners.

5.6 Recommendations

This study has shown how much I have learned through action research which in turn has improved my teaching of reading comprehension in English. It recommends that high school teachers would benefit from professional development in the teaching of reading.

In Section 5.4 above, I have explained how I have developed professionally as an English literacy teacher. Therefore, I would recommend that teachers should be encouraged to further their education as to develop and empower themselves with information that will help them gain a deeper understanding of how to teach reading and comprehension strategies.

There is a dire need for resources like libraries and dictionaries in rural schools. These are necessary if one is to improve the situation and expose learners to English texts. I have demonstrated that if teachers take responsibility for seeking out resources, these can sometimes be obtained.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a discussion of key issues that arose in chapter 4. It has highlighted the major problems that prevented rural learners from being able to read English texts with understanding.

One of my research goals was to teach comprehension strategies in order to help my learners read with greater understanding. I fell short of my goal as some of the weak learners were unable to progress satisfactorily.

This study has challenged my assumptions about rural learners. I had thought that they were merely lazy, but I now realise that the problems runs deeper than that. Their lack of exposure to English and the lack of support from their homes play a major role in their inability to learn.

Action research helped me gain insight into my own teaching and to better understand the learners I worked with. What also emerged from this study is the importance of creating a safe environment for learning, and patiently teaching comprehension strategies as a regular ongoing part of my English language programme.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PERMISSION LETTERS

Appendix 1 (a): A letter to the principal

01 January 2010

The principal

I am registered as a part time student at Rhodes University. I have completed the first half of a Master's degree in Education which I started in January, 2010. I am now doing my research component required for completion of the degree. I am very grateful to you for allowing me to use your school for this.

The goal of my research is to look at developing English comprehension strategies in Grade 8. Because this is such a vast field I have decided to concentrate on dictionary skills as the focus of my study as this is a requirement in the curriculum. I would like to use two lessons a week for five weeks to implement the project. These would be the lessons time-tabled for English in the term calendar. I have asked the class teacher to video tape the lessons and to have discussions with me after each lesson, giving critical comments and suggestions on the lesson. I will also be using the learners' written work and oral responses, in the class and in small group discussions, as part of the data to validate the research.

The school, class teacher and learners will remain anonymous in the final research report. I also understand that no member of your school is obliged to participate in this project but should do so voluntary.

Yours sincerely

E.N. Matakane

Appendix l(b): A letter to the SGB

21 January 2011

The SGB

I am registered as a part time student at Rhodes University. I have completed the first half of a Master's degree in Education which I started in January, 2010. I am now doing my research component required for completion of the degree. I request permission to carry out my research to grade 8 learners.

The intentions of the research is to develop English comprehension strategies that will help learners to read English with understanding and that could be of great help in other Learning Areas. The data for analysis will be collected from the Non-participant Observer; samples of learners' work; interviews and questionnaires. This information will be used in the final report.

The school, the Non-participant observer and learners will remain anonymous in the final research report.

Yours sincerely

E.N.Matakane (Ms)

Appendix 2: Lesson Outlines

Appendix 2: Lesson outlines

LESSON 01

Topic: Meet James Banda (part 1)

Duration of the period: 50mins (3 days = 150 mins)

LO: 3 Read and view AS: 3.2 uses of dictionary; understand simple thesaurus

LO 3: Read and view AS: 1.4 distinguishes main points from supporting detail

LO:3 Read and view AS: 2.1 summarises information

DAY 1

Opening allocation

Time

The teacher asked questions based on dictionary skills

5mins

e.g. 1. What information do we get from the dictionary?

2. Do you think dictionary is important? Why?

3. When is dictionary used?

Key Activity

20mins

The teacher mentioned 3 strategies to focus on at this stage when reading

comprehension: (a) Vocabulary development

(b) surveying (skimming and scanning) (c) summarizing.

The teacher taught learners a single strategy and focused mainly on vocabulary development using a dictionary.

The teacher told learners the importance of vocabulary knowledge and modeled how to look for a meaning of a word in a dictionary.

Copies of pages of a dictionary were distributed to learners. The teacher gave examples of sentences with difficult words that needed to be checked from the copies they were given.

Key Task	20mins
Learners were given a passage to read and write down words they did not understand.	
Learners were asked to use their dictionaries to check the meaning of those words.	
The teacher scaffolded learners in their groups as they were struggling to find meanings of words from the dictionary.	
Journal writing	5mins

DAY 2	
Opening	5mins
The teacher and the learners marked the task done on vocabulary knowledge. Learners were asked to give meaning of the words.	
Key Activity	15mins
The teacher taught learners the second strategy of reading comprehension - surveying (skimming and scanning). Learners were taught what surveying was and how to use the strategy in a comprehension.	
Key Task	25mins
Learners used the same comprehension passage to practice surveying strategy. The teacher scaffolded and monitored the groups.	
The teacher and the learners did the activity on the chalkboard.	
Journal writing	5mins

DAY 3

Opening**5mins**

The teacher revised the strategy taught using questions e.g.

What is surveying? How do you use surveying?

Key Activity**20mins**

The teacher taught the third strategy – summary writing. They were taught summary writing using sentences in a point form.

Learners were taught to look for important ideas in the passage.

The teacher modeled how to summarize focusing on the first paragraph of the passage. The teacher used the chalkboard to show learners how to summarise.

Key task**20mins**

Learners using the same comprehension passage they used from the beginning, were asked to write a summary.

Learners were asked to list 5 sentences/facts to summarise the comprehension.

Journal writing**5mins****LESSON 2**

Topic: comprehension

Duration: 50mins x (3 days = 150mins)

LO: 3 Read and view

AS: 3.2 uses of dictionary; understand simple thesaurus

LO 3: Read and view

AS: 1.4 distinguishes main points from supporting detail

LO:3 Read and view

AS: 2.1 summarises information

DAY 1**Opening****5mins**

A quick revision was done on how to use a dictionary.

The teacher emphasized the three strategies that we should focus on, and started with vocabulary development.

Key Activity

20mins

The learners were instructed to use the same passage. The teacher read it aloud substituting the difficult words with simple words they found from the dictionary. The teacher also explained phrases that were not clear.

The teacher used words in the first paragraph in sentences so that learners could understand their meaning.

Key task

20mins

Learners were instructed to focus on the second paragraph and use those difficult words in sentences.

Each group had to present their sentences to the class.

The teacher scaffolded the learners as they were working in groups.

Journal writing

5mins

DAY 2

Opening

5mins

The teacher emphasized the importance of using a dictionary to find meanings of difficult words and use them in sentences in order to grasp their meanings.

Key Activity

15mins

The teacher repeated the surveying strategy (skimming And scanning),drilling it so that learners may understand it.

The teacher modeled how to survey looking at the title/heading.

Key task

25mins

Using the same passage, learners were asked to read the passage with understanding and apply surveying strategy looking at the first and the last paragraph. The teacher scaffolded learners and also marked their work in groups.

Learners were given a chance to do corrections.

Journal writing

5mins

DAY 3

Opening

5mins

The teacher asked questions on summary writing and revised the important things to remember when they write a summary.

Key Activity

10mins

Learners were asked to take out their comprehension and through leading questions, a teacher modeled how to summarize the first paragraph on the chalkboard.

Key Task

Learners in groups were instructed to continue with summary writing still practicing a point form.

Learners were given leading/guiding questions to be able to come up with important facts.

20mins

Different groups were given a chance to present their summaries

10mins

Journal writing

5mins

LESSON 3

Topic: Meet James Banda (part 2)

Duration: 130 mins (2days x 50 mins and 1 day x 30mins)

LO: 3 Read and view AS: 3.2 uses of dictionary; understand simple thesaurus

LO 3: Read and view AS: 1.4 distinguishes main points from supporting detail

LO:3 Read and view AS: 2.1 summarises information

DAY1

Vocabulary knowledge

Opening 5mins

The teacher used questions revising the use of dictionaries.

Key activity 20mins

1. The teacher asked the group leaders to take copies of the passage and the glossary done for them and distribute them to members of the group.

2. The teacher read aloud the passage for the learners and explained where necessary.

3. Learners were instructed to use the glossary given.

Key task 20mins

1. Learners were asked to write their own simple sentences using the words they were given.

2. The teacher scaffolded and monitored the learners.

3. Learners were told to read their sentences for the group.

Journal writing 5mins

DAY 2

Opening 5mins

The teacher quickly revised how to apply surveying strategy (skimming and scanning) and also asking questions to learners.

Key task

20mins

1. Learners were told to work in their groups.
2. They were given a comprehension- Meet James Banda (2) and were instructed to apply surveying strategy.
3. The teacher scaffolded the learners checking each group.
4. Learners were given a chance to give their feedback and the teacher wrote on the chalkboard important points from learners.

Journal writing

5mins

DAY 3

Opening

5mins

The teacher selected few words and asked their meaning to the learners.

The teacher asked the learners the important facts they came up with during surveying.

Key activity

15min

1. The teacher again told the learners to make use of the glossary as they were doing summary writing.
2. Learners were asked to read the passage quietly.

Key task

25mins

1. Learners in their groups were asked to do summary writing
2. Learners were asked to present their work.

3. Good points were written on the chalkboard.

Journal writing

5mins

LESSON 4

Topic: The fall guy (comprehension)

Duration: 50 mins x (3days= 150mins)

LO: 3 Read and view AS: 3.2 uses of dictionary; understand simple thesaurus

LO 3: Read and view AS: 1.4 distinguishes main points from supporting detail

LO:3 Read and view AS: 2.1 summarises information

DAY 1

Opening

5mins

1. Learners were asked questions that will lead them to gain a better understanding of the comprehension, e.g.

- Give types of abuse you know.
- What do we mean by physical abuse?
- Is there any child you know who is physically abused?
- What happens to him/her? Who is the abuser?

2. The teacher explains to learners the meaning of the title of the comprehension as it had a hidden meaning – ‘The fall guy.’

Key activity

20mins

1. The learners were given a passage by group leaders.
2. The teacher read aloud the comprehension for learners, explaining certain phrases used.

Key task

20mins

1. Learners were told to use surveying strategies, looking at the sub-headings; first and the last paragraph and write what they understand.
2. Learners were asked to give feedback on the task.

Journal writing

5mins

Day 2

Opening

5mins

The teacher revised what was done yesterday with learners

Using questions. The teacher emphasized important ideas and stressed the importance of surveying.

Key activity

20mins

1. Learners were instructed to work individually.

2. They were instructed to read the comprehension, after that learners were given a list of words and their meanings.

The meanings of words were jumbled.

3. The teacher demonstrated what learners were expected to do taking one word as an example.

Key task

20mins

Vocabulary development

1. The learners were instructed to match the word with its meaning without using a dictionary.

2. Learners were asked to exchange their books to do peer marking.

3. Learners were instructed to use dictionaries to check the correct meanings of the words given.

Journal writing

5mins

DAY 3**Opening****5mins**

The teacher told learners the importance of using the meaning of words as they read the passage as that will help them understand the text better.

Key activity**15mins**

1. The teacher reminded learners that when they do summary writing they should focus and write short sentences that will make sense.

2. Learners were instructed to read and re-read the passage to understand it.

Key task**25mins**

1. Learners were instructed to work individually when doing summary writing.

2. Learners were instructed to use their own words when writing summary.

3. Learners were given guiding questions (see their worksheets)

3. Learners gave feedback on their task

Journal writing**5mins****LESSON 5**

Topic: Birds

Duration: 50mins x (3 days = 150 mins)

LO: 3 Read and view

AS: 3.2 uses of dictionary; understand simple thesaurus

LO 3: Read and view	AS: 1.4 distinguishes main points from supporting detail	
LO:3 Read and view	AS: 2.1 summarises information	
Day 1		
Opening		5mins
The teacher asked questions related to birds e.g. What type of birds do learners know? Where do we find those birds? How do they survive?		
Key Activity		20mins
1.The teacher briefly taught the learners about birds and their behaviors and how they adapt in different habitants.		
2. Learners were given a passage about birds taken from Natural Science.		
3. The teacher read aloud the passage for the learners and explained where necessary.		
Key Task		
1.Learners were instructed to do surveying, looking at the title; first and the last paragraph and write down what they understood. Dictionaries were issued to look for the meaning of 'adaptation'.		
2.Learners were instructed to work as groups. Their worksheets had leading questions.		
3. Learners gave feedback on what they have written		
Journal writing		10mins
		5mins

DAY 2		
Opening		5mins
The teacher and the learners revised what was done the previous day using questions.		
Key task		40mins

<p>1.Learners were given a task to do it individually where they will match words with their meanings (vocabulary knowledge) without using a dictionary.</p> <p>2. The teacher and the learners mark the task.</p> <p>3. Learners used dictionaries to check the correct meanings of the words and do their corrections.</p>	
Journal writing	5mins

DAY 3	
Opening	5mins
Key Activity	15mins
<p>The teacher introduced a new method of summarizing using tables. Using the same passage, the teacher modeled how to summarize and place in information in columns given.</p>	
Key Task	25mins
<p>1.Learners were instructed to continue with summary writing individually using the table.</p> <p>2. After the feedback, corrections were written on the chalkboard.</p>	
Journal writing	
5mins	
LESSON 6	

Topic: The development of the Nazi Party (HSS).

Duration: 50 mins x (3 days = 150mins)

LO: 3 Read and view AS: 3.2 uses of dictionary; understand simple thesaurus

LO 3: Read and view AS: 1.4 distinguishes main points from supporting detail

LO:3 Read and view AS: 2.1 summarises information

DAY 1

Opening **5mins**

The teacher asked questions concerning the Nazi party to check if learners know something about it.

Key activity **20mins**

1.Learners were given a passage extracted from Human Social Sciences.

2.The teacher read aloud the passage and explained terms and phrases used.

Key task **20mins**

1.Learners were instructed to work individually in their task applying surveying strategy.

2.They were instructed to look at the topic; the first and the last paragraph and write down what they understand about them. They were given worksheets

3. Learners shared their ideas in the classroom.

4. The teacher wrote important ideas on the chalkboard.

5. Learners were asked to bring scissors to prepare for vocabulary cards.

(The teacher asked permission to use study time for the preparation of vocabulary cards)

Journal writing **5mins**

DAY 2

Opening **5mins**

1.The teacher instructed learners to work in pairs and exchange their cards.	
Key task	20mins
Learners in their pairs asked each other the meaning of words.	
Journal writing	5mins

DAY 3	
Opening	5mins
The teacher asked learners questions about the passage.	
Key activity	20mins
1.The teacher revised how to do summary writing using a table form.	
2.The teacher read aloud the text and explained where necessary	
3. The teacher drew columns on the board and modeled again how to select and insert the correct information in each column.	
Key task	20mins
1.Learners were instructed to continue with summary writing using the table form.	
2. Learners were given a chance to share their answers; best answers were written on the chalkboard.	
Journal writing	5mins

Appendix 3 (a): Learner Activities

(a)
Appendix 3: Learner activities

WORKSHEET 1

LESSON 1

MEET JAMES BANDA (Part 1)

VOCABULARY

Write down words you do not understand and check their meaning from a dictionary.

Words I do not understand

Meaning

1. Accompany	to go with somebody to a place
2. Various	several different.
3. Warden	a person whose job is to look after a place and the people
4. Hails	a line of marks that shows which way to go
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

SURVEY

- Write down what you understand in paragraph 1.
~~James~~ James father travels to different Game Parks every year to make a film
- What have you understood in the last paragraph?
 James wants to travel to other countries one day just like his parents

SUMMARY

Summarise each paragraph in a short sentence. Remember to write what is important.

Write 5 sentences only.

- James father works at a Game Parks to produce films.

2. It is important to obey the rules of the Game Park and his father had to obtain special permission from the Warden before he can go into the bush.
3. James father have to travel with the Game Ranger because it knows the Park very well.

4. James father wants to become a photographer just like his dad because he likes to travel ~~area~~

5. James parents always took him with them when they are doing their annual trip.

WORKSHEET 2

LESSON 2

VOCABULARY

Use the following words in sentences:

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----|
| 1. Photographer | 2. Film company | 3. Accompany | 4. Equipment | 5. |
| Permission | 6. Warden | 7. Game Ranger | 8. Trails | |

1. The photographer shot a wonderful image last week.
2. The latest comedy movies was released by a film company called GHP productions.
3. I will accompany rap stars to New York.
4. We just need equipment to build a new building.
5. Do not take my property with out my permission.
6. The warden do not allow tourists to go into the bush.
7. The game ranger was eaten by a large lion when he tried to take a picture of it.
8. Lets follow the animal trails to find what we looking for.

SURVEY

Use the same questions as in worksheet 1 and answer them showing a better understanding of the passage.

WORKSHEET 3

LESSON 3

MEET JAMES BANDA (Part 2)

VOCABULARY (Learners were given a glossary)

1. Find the meaning of the following words.

1. Dormitory → a big room for a lot of people, usually in a school
2. Chaos → a situation in which everything is confused and nothing is organized
3. Reputation → what people think or say about some body
4. Panic → to have a sudden feeling of fear that you do things
5. Exception → a person or thing that is not the same as the others
6. Alert → watching and listening for something with all your attention
7. Assemble → to put parts of something together
8. Muttering → a thick yellow sauce with a very strong taste

2. Write your own sentences using the words above.

1. Dormitory is a big room for a lot of people
2. In a situation in which everything is confused
3. Reputation is what people think or say about some body
4. Panic is to have a sudden feeling of fear
5. Exception is a person or thing that is not the same as the others
6. Alert is watching and listening for something with all your attention
7. Assemble is to put parts of something together
8. Muttering is a thick yellow sauce with a very strong taste

WORKSHEET 4

LESSON 4

The Fall Guy

SURVEY

1. What have you learnt in paragraph 1?

The fall guy's father had an injury on his foot and that made him angry

2. What have you learnt in the last paragraph?

The fall guy started a new life where he had peace at last and what his father did to him he will never do it to his son.

VOCABULARY

Match words in **Column A** with their meaning in **Column B**

Column A	Column B
1. saw rig	an instrument used to mix together an egg
2. balance wheel	a thing that makes you feel happy
3. bounce	angry
4. scar	to leave
5. fun	The wheel that a driver turns to control the direction
6. mad	a mark that is left on the skin
7. egg-beater - 1	Saw that makes initial cuts in a log of wood
8. quit	A wheel that regulates rate of movement in a machine
9. steering wheel	moved quickly away from a surface

CORRECTIONS

1. Saw ring that makes initial cuts in a
2. balanced wheel ^{log & wheel} a wheel that regulates rate of
3. movement in a machine
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

SUMMARY

Read the passage carefully and summarise five main points:

- Write in full sentences.
- Do not repeat the same point.
- Write in your own words. Do not copy sentences as they are from the passage.

Summarise the passage looking at:

- The relationship between the father and the son.
- What was he blamed for?

1. The fall guy and his father didn't have a good relationship because his father was always angry because of the injury he had.
2. The fall guy's father didn't quite like fall guy than other children he will always whip him everyday he gets home from school.
3. The fall guy's mother couldn't look after fall guy because she had many other children to look after and when they get into trouble he is always the one to be blamed.
4. He was blamed of something he didn't do, he decided to leave at the age of 14 and found himself a job and his father found him and took his money.
5. He again found another job and worked for a long time and his father didn't find him.

WORKSHEET 5

LESSON 5

Bird beaks and bird food

1. SURVEY

1. What is the meaning of adaptation?

Adaptation is to change the way that you do things because you are in a new situation.

2. What do you think is the reason for the title of this passage 'Bird beaks and bird food'?

Because the passage talks about bird beaks and their food.

3. What have you understood in paragraph 1?

That there are many different types of birds that are found in South Africa.

4. What have you learnt in the last paragraph?

That different birds have different habitats.

2. VOCABULARY

Match words in Column A with their meaning in Column B (Do not use dictionaries during this activity. Dictionaries will be used later).

COLUMN A

COLUMN B

1. habitat	birds mouth
2. wild	dead flesh 9
3. site	sweet liquid produced by flowers
4. beak	living area 1
5. prey	a pocket of skin in some animals/birds 7

The development of the Nazi (extract from social science textbook)

SURVEY

What do you understand about:

- The title: The Nazi Party has grown up to another level.
- The first paragraph: Germany went into a chaos with social, economic and political. The country was bankrupt.
- The last paragraph: Jewish people were unable to do anything for themselves, because they were not allowed to.

VOCABULARY

During this lesson, learners were introduced in vocabulary cards where a card had a difficult word on the other side and its meaning on the other side. E.g.

desperate

Needing or wanting something very much
--

Learners worked in pairs asking each other the meaning of words.

SUMMARY

Complete the table by filling in information that fits well in each column.

Year	Person/people/country	Event
1914	Germany	There was social, economic and political chaos
1919	Adolf Hitler	joined a small party, the Germany Workers Party
1923	Adolf Hitler	Hitler becomes the leader of the Party
1929	Germany	the world's economies went into a depression

1934	Adolf Hitler	he was selected as a leader.
1935	Jewish people	all rights were removed from the Jewish people.
1938	Jewish people	they had to register all property they owned with the NP.
1939	Jewish	no Jewish person was allowed to run a business.

WORKSHEET 6

LESSON 6

The development of the Nazi (extract from social science textbook)

SURVEY

What do you understand about:

- a) The title: I think it means many people want jobs in the government
- b) The first paragraph: People in Germany were not able to solve problems. People in Germany to want solutions
- c) The last paragraph: Munichers became the center of the Nazi Party

VOCABULARY

During this lesson, learners were introduced in vocabulary cards where a card had a difficult word on the other side and its meaning on the other side. E.g.

desperate

Needing or wanting something very much

Learners worked in pairs asking each other the meaning of words.

SUMMARY

Complete the table by filling in information that's fits well in each column.

Year	Person/people/country	Event
1914	Germany	There was social, economic and political chaos
1919	Adolf Hitler	they was opportunity for a political party that would solve the problems the German Party
1923	Hitler	hit radically changed the way Germany resister
1929	Germany	hit described that people were not able to solve the problems of the German Party

1934	Hitler	was elected as the leader of the party that gave him political power
1935	germen	Nuremberg became the site of the Nazi party in the 1930s
1938	Jewish people	had to register all property and also payment with the Nazi state
1939	people	more than 100,000 people were murdered by the Nazi state

Appendix 3 (b): Copies of comprehension texts use during intervention

Appendix 3b: Copies of comprehension text used during intervention

Meet James Banda 1

Hello! I'm a new student at Phomolong Secondary School. Let me introduce myself to you.

My name is James Banda and I arrived from Malawi a few days ago. I will stay at this school for the rest of the term.

Let me tell you why I have come here.

My father is a photographer and a film producer. He works for a film company in Malawi. He makes films about the wild animals in the various Game Parks in southern Africa.



Each year my father travels to a different Game Park to make a film. My mother accompanies him. At the moment they are in the Kruger National Park. However they do not stay in the Rest Camps where the tourists go. They take a tent and all their own supplies and equipment and go on foot along the animal trails until they are deep in the bush.

As you probably know, tourists must stay in their cars when they are in the Game Park and they must keep to the main roads. These are some of the rules of the Game Park. My father has to obtain special permission from the Warden of a Game Park before he can go into the bush. Before we leave Malawi, he writes to the Warden and explains what he

wants to do. Normally the warden allows my father to carry out his plans, but only if he takes a Game Ranger with him. Of course my father always agrees to this. He knows it makes sense for a Game Ranger to travel with them. A Game Ranger knows the Park in great detail. He carries a radio so that he can keep in contact with the Rest Camps and also he carries a gun.

I really look forward to my parents' annual trips to other countries because they always take me with them. During term I go to school in the country we visit. At half term or during the holidays, I spend some time with my parents in the Game Park before we return to Malawi.

Don't you think that's an exciting life?

Hello! It's James Banda again. Let me introduce you to my brother, Joseph. He's at boarding school in Swaziland. He enjoys boarding school very much and he's been there now for two years.

One weekend he came to visit Sipho and me. During the Friday evening, he told us about an incident that happened at his school.

This was his story.

The Fire

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

What a noise that bell made, I thought. And it was still dark in the dormitory. Sleepily I pulled back the curtain a little and peered through the window. Outside it was only just getting light and a few stars were still scattered round the sky. I looked at my watch. Five thirty. Another hour before we had to get up but the bell continued its deafening noise.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

Some of the other boys heard it too, now, and they sat up in bed, unwillingly, rubbing their eyes and muttering complaints.



It suddenly occurred to me what was wrong. There was a fire somewhere and the bell was a warning to us.

"It's a fire," I cried urgently. "The bell! It's still ringing. It must be the Fire Bell. Come on. All of you. We must get out of here."

The panic in my voice soon spread round the dormitory and boys jumped out of bed, now fully alert and worried.

"The Fire Drill!" cried someone else. "The Fire Drill!"



Everyone agreed. We must carry out the Fire Drill. Well, we tried, but it was not very successful. We all began shouting at once and repeating the instructions that the Headmaster had told us so frequently.

'Get dressed quickly.'

'Leave the dormitory quietly and as fast as possible.'

'Don't panic.'

'Assemble on the football field.'

'Close all the windows before you leave.'

→ 'Get everyone out of bed.'

As well as all the noise, there was chaos

and confusion everywhere. Some boys couldn't find their shoes, others were too frightened to dress properly and they struggled out of the dormitory, dragging on their trousers as they went, losing their balance and finally falling over in the rush for the door. In the end we all managed to get out safely ... with one exception. Mandla Shabalala had a reputation for sleeping longer than anyone else and as we scrambled through the door, he took no notice of us all. He lay there, fast asleep. Now we had ignored all the instructions in the Fire Drill.

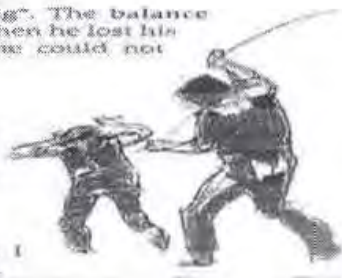
The Fall Guy

My father lost his foot on a saw rig. The balance wheel⁸ broke and cut his foot off. When he lost his foot, he was very angry because he could not work for a long time.

My father starts to hit me

I was twelve years old when my father took me out of school. I had to work at home every day in the woods, cutting wood and carrying it for miles.

Everyday when I got home, my father whipped me. I would get so mad when he beat me. Sometimes I ran away and my mother helped me.



- ⁸ When my father whipped me, I felt like I wanted to hit him so hard he would not find his way back for a long time. I wondered when he would stop whipping me. But he just kept on, every day.

My mother cannot cope

- ⁹ My mother had her hands full with fifteen children. We lived at Ripton, four miles from the store. When we got into trouble we climbed a big pine tree. We waited in the tree and hoped no one would find us.
- ⁹ Some of the kids were fun but others fought. I was the fall guy. If one of the other boys or girls did something wrong, I was always punished for it.
- ⁹ I have a scar on my head where my father hit me. One day, he accused me of stealing his cigarettes. Then he hit me with an egg-beater and cut my head right open. I just stood there and told my father I didn't take his cigarettes. Someone else did. But he did not want to hear.

I am blamed

- ⁹ One day my brother and sister were playing. My brother asked my sister to hold the steering wheel on the chopping block. When he swung the axe, it bounced off the wheel and cut her finger off. My father came to fetch me and I was punished.
- ⁹ When I turned 14, I ran away from home and took a farm job. I worked there for a long time. It took my father a while to find me. When he did, he took my money.

Peace at last

- ¹⁰ So I quit there and went to find another job. I didn't see him again for a long time. And now I say, 'What my father did to me, I will never do to my son.'

adapted from 'The Fall Guy' by C. Barrows, published in 'Oscar's True-Books' printed 1948

Bird beaks and bird food

There are many different kinds of birds

There are about 875 different kinds of birds in South Africa. They are found in many different habitats (living areas). There are birds in the deserts, in the tropical forests, in the bushveld and on the highveld. There are also many different kinds of wild birds in our parks and gardens.

Why are there so many different kinds of birds?

- 2 One reason for there being so many kinds of birds is that there are very many habitats and different kinds of food for birds. Each kind of bird is adapted (suited) to its habitat and to the food it eats.
- 3 Different kinds of birds live in different habitats and also eat different kinds of foods. This means that they can all find enough food and places to nest. They do not have to fight over food and nesting sites.

Different kinds of birds have different beaks

- 4 Birds that eat different foods have different beaks. The

shape of the beak will tell you a lot about the food that a bird eats, because the beak of a bird is suited to its diet. A mossie (Cape sparrow) has a short, broad, strong beak.



Cape sparrow
(mossie)

Mossies eat grain and seeds, which can be very hard. Their strong little beaks are suited to this tough diet.

Birds of prey

- 5 Eagles, hawks and falcons are birds of prey. They usually kill their prey. Birds of prey have strong, sharp, curved beaks. They use their beaks to tear the meat that they eat.
- 6 Vultures need their strong beaks to tear the carrion (dead flesh) which they eat. Some birds of prey found in South Africa are the black-shouldered kite, the black eagle, the fish eagle and the martial eagle.

EXTRACT FROM HSS TEXTBOOK

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NAZI PARTY

At the end of the World War 1, Germany was in a state of social, economic and political chaos. Germany had started the war in 1914. The war caused Germany to suffer many economic and financial penalties as well. German people were desperate for someone to lead them and to provide them with solutions to their problems.

Adolf Hitler, an out-of-work artist and bitter ex-soldier, saw an opportunity for a political party that would solve the problems the German people. In 1919 Hitler joined a small party, the German Workers' Party. By 1923 Hitler had radically changed the party, becoming its leader. He provided discipline and direction for the members, created a uniform, flag and symbol, and gave the party a new name- National Socialist German Workers' Party.

THE IMPACT OF NAZISM

After the Wall Street Crash in 1929, the world's economies went into a depression. Germany was badly affected by this and the economy collapsed again. As conditions in the country became worse, Nazi Party seemed to be the only answer to the to the country's problems. By August 1934 Hitler was elected as the leader, his aim was to destroy democracy that gave him limited powers. Hitler's focus was on education and the youth for Nazification programme. By 1939 more than eight million young people were members of the Nazi Youth.

Religion was one of the greatest threats to Hitler's policies. In 1933 Hitler signed an agreement, called the Concordat with the Pope in which he promised not to threaten religion. The reality was different, Hitler set up a Reich Church- German flags were displayed on the altars, and the swastika hung alongside the cross. Religious writings were re-written to glorify Nazism. Christians like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who tried to challenge these changes were arrested and hanged.

THE NUREMBERG LAWS

The town of Nuremberg was the second-largest town in Germany. Nuremberg became the centre of the Nazi Party in the 1930s. The Nuremberg Laws were passed in 1935 and removed all rights from the Jewish people. By 1936, more than half of the German Jews were unemployed. This was what Hitler wanted to achieve. Hitler did not view the Jewish people as being part of German. In 1938 all Jewish people had to register all property that they owned with the Nazi Party. No Jewish person was allowed

Appendix 3 (c): Glossaries

Appendix 3c: GLOSSARIES

GLOSSARY: 1

LESSON 2: WORKSHEET 2

- ❖ Accompany (v) : to travel or to go somewhere with somebody
- ❖ Equipment (n): things that are needed for a particular purpose or activity
- ❖ Film Company (n): a business that produces films/ that makes films
- ❖ Game Ranger (n): a person working in the Park and knows it in great detail
- ❖ Permission (n): to allow somebody to do something
- ❖ Photographer (n): a person who takes photographs especially as a job
- ❖ Trails (n, v) a long line or series of marks that is left by somebody or something
- ❖ Warden (n): a person who is responsible for taking care of a particular place and

GLOSSARY: 2

LESSON 3: WORKSHEET 3

- ❖ Panic (v) to suddenly feel frightened so that you cannot think clearly and you say or you do something stupid, dangerous, etc.
- ❖ Exception (n) a person or thing that is not included in a general statement
- ❖ Chaos (n) a state of complete confusion and lack of order
- ❖ Reputation (n) the opinion that people have about what somebody/something is like, based on what has happened in the past.
- ❖ Alert (adj) able to think quickly; quick to notice things.
(v) to warn somebody about a danger or urgent situation
- ❖ Muttering (n) words that you speak very quietly to yourself
- ❖ Assembly (n) the meeting together of a group of people for a particular purpose
- ❖ Dormitory (n) a room for several people to sleep in especially in a school

Appendix 3 (d): Samples of Unit assessment before and after intervention

Appendix 3d: samples of unit assessment before and after intervention

12 Circle 8 29-01-2011
 English test.

(1) It was the bell that was ringing.
 (2) The time was five thirty.
 (3) It was six o'clock.
 (4) They sat up in the bed.
 i) Unwillingly.
 ii) Rubbing their eyes.
 (5) He realised that there was a fire somewhere and the bell was a warning to them.
 (6) No some other boys that complain about the bell.
 (7) Yes the bell ~~was~~ was still ringing.
 (8) Yes it was five thirty.
 (9) They tried to carry out the fire drill.
 (10) The other boys couldn't find their shoes, others were too frightened to dress properly.
 (11) It's Mandela because had a reputation for sleeping longer than anyone else else.
 (12) The boys struggled out of the dormitory.
 (13) They dressed quickly.
 (14) They ignored to leave to dormitory quietly as fast as possible.

21-02-2011

Corrections

(1) It was ^{five} thirty when the bell rang.
 (2) They sat up in the beds unwillingly.
 (3) They muttered complaints.

07
25

Grade 9

28 January 2016

English test

DATE:
SIGNATURE:

NTS
Remart

1. A bell woke Joseph up.
2. He looked at his watch, the time is five thirty.
3. He looked the watch time @ five thirty.
3. His normal time is to get up is six o'clock.
4. a) They were too frightened to dress properly.
b) Some boys at all couldn't find their shoes.
c) They struggled out of the dormitory.
5. a) Every complained about the bell.
6. The boys try to get dressed quickly, leave the dormitory.
7. The boys struggled out of the dormitory, dragging on their trousers.
8. Mandela Shabalala, because he had a reputation for sleeping longer than anyone else and as we scrambled through the door.
9. The boys leave the dormitory quiet and as fast as possible.
10. They must carry out the fire drill.
11. They tried but it was not very successful.

Corrections

1. The noise made by the bell.
2. It was
- 3.

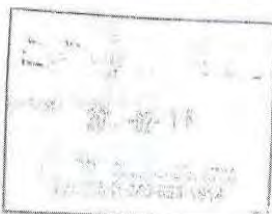
00
/ 25

Under

28/01/2010

19/04/10

English Test



- 2. looked at my watch
- 3. Sried

4. boys Head it too now and they sat up in bed
 unwillingly ~~to~~ rubbing their eyes and mutter-
 ing complaints.

H.O.D. _____
 DATE: _____
 SIGNATURE: _____

- 5. He stop it
- 6. yes it was five thirty
- 6. the boys jumped out of bed
- 7. now fully alert and worried
- 8. The Fire Drill cried someone else The Fire Drill
- 9. some boys couldn't find their shoes.

10.

Hello! It's James Banda again. Let me introduce you to my brother, Joseph. He's at boarding school in Swaziland. He enjoys boarding school very much and he's been there now for two years.

One weekend he came to visit Siphon and me. During the Friday evening, he told us about an incident that happened at his school.

This was his story.

The Fire

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

What a noise that bell made, I thought. And it was still dark in the dormitory. Sleepily I pulled back the curtain a little and peered through the window. Outside it was only just getting light and a few stars were still scattered round the sky. I looked at my watch. Five thirty. Another hour before we had to get up but the bell continued its deafening noise.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

Some of the other boys heard it too, now, and they sat up in bed, unwillingly, rubbing their eyes and muttering complaints.



It suddenly occurred to me what was wrong. There was a fire somewhere and the bell was a warning to us.

"It's a fire," I cried urgently. "The bell! It's still ringing. It must be the Fire Bell. Come on. All of you. We must get out of here."

The panic in my voice soon spread round the dormitory and boys jumped out of bed, now fully alert and worried.

"The Fire Drill!" cried someone else. "The Fire Drill!"



Everyone agreed. We must carry out the Fire Drill. Well, we tried, but it was not very successful. We all began shouting at once and repeating the instructions that the Headmaster had told us so frequently.

'Get dressed quickly.'

'Leave the dormitory quietly and as fast as possible.'

'Don't panic.'

'Assemble on the football field.'

'Close all the windows before you leave.'

→ 'Get everyone out of bed.'

As well as all the noise, there was chaos

and confusion everywhere. Some boys couldn't find their shoes, others were too frightened to dress properly and they struggled out of the dormitory, dragging on their trousers as they went, losing their balance and finally falling over in the rush for the door. In the end we all managed to get out safely ... with one exception. Mandla Shabalala had a reputation for sleeping longer than anyone else and as we scrambled through the door, he took no notice of us all. He lay there, fast asleep. Now we had ignored all the instructions in the Fire Drill.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What woke Joseph up? (2)
2. What time was it when he looked at his watch? (2)
3. What time did they normally have to get up? (2)
4. What did some of the other boys do when they heard the bell?
(Mention three things.) (6)
5. How do you think Joseph realised what was wrong? Choose the best answer.
 - a) Everyone complained about the bell.
 - b) The bell did not stop ringing. (1)
 - c) It was five thirty
6. What did the boys try to do? (2)
7. What happened to the boys who did not dress properly? (2)
8. Who did not get out of bed? Why? (3)
9. How did the boys leave the dormitory? (2)
10. Mention one instruction of the fire drill? (1)
11. Which was the final instruction in the fire drill which they ignored?
(2)

[TOTAL = 25]

21
30

H.O.D. 05 August 2011

DATE: 13/09/2011

SIGNATURE: [Signature]

English Test

1. True ✓✓✓
2. False ✓✓✓
3. Yes ✓✓
4. The youngest was Sung-Min. ✓
5. Helping at lunch was his most difficult task! ✓
6. Because he wanted his high school community service requirement to be filled in a productive way. ✓✓
7. C) ✓
8. He could not communicate well with them because some of residents had trouble focusing on eating and would often start shaking their heads violently when he tried to feed them. ✓
9. d) ✓
10. No, they did not only play, but they had a teacher who helped them to study. ✓
11. Because Young-il was barely four feet tall. ✓
12. I think he would choose the volunteer work at the residence because he is looking forward to seeing the residents again and helping them and having them help him. ✓
13. I think he will change because the residents' behaviour is the same as his. ✓
14. I think Jun is a kind, understanding and a patient person, I like him. ✓
15. I would be willing to, because I want to help those people and also learn new things from them. ✓

14
30

05 August 2011

English Test

- 1. True ✓
- 2. True ♀
- 3. Yes ♀
- 4. Sung-Min ✓
- 5. Help → Helping at lunch ✓
- 6. He wanted her high school community service to be filled in a productive way. ✓
- 7. C = A rehabilitation residence ✓
- 8. ^{Some} ~~they~~ wanted to clap their hands, some wanted to say 'hello' ✓
- 9. D = His way of saying goodbye ✓
- 10. They studied ✓
- 11. Embarrassed ♀
- 12. Volunteer work at the residence. Because he likes communicating with and he wants to help them not to feel bad about how they look like and to know that someone cares and loves them. ✓
- 13. No. Because he was embarrassed when Young-jil instructed him and he didn't want to be instructed. ✓
- 14. Yes. It's a good thing he didn't want to be instructed like a young boy ♀
- 15. Yes. To help those people to have something to do and have some fun like normal people and not to feel neglected and they will think no-one loves and they will regret ever being born. ✓

05/30

05 August 2011

English
Test

- 1) True ✓
- 2) True ✓
- 3) Yes it was necessary for Jun-Min Kim. ✓
- 4) The youngest is Sung-Min. ✓
- 5) They was scared imagining what the realities of working as the residents the director was brief.
- 6) They walked at a rehabilitation residence. ✓
- 7) They was reluctant to go there on that first day. ✓
- 8) As his way of saying goodbye. ✓
- 9) They also study ✓
- 10) Young-il was the only one they spoke for me understand.
- 11) The previous summer I had gardened and pick up trash activity that really seem.
- 12) Yes he did it. ✓
- 13) I'm feel unhappy ✓
- 14) No I don't like it. ✓

Q
Q
Q

JUN-MIN KIM'S EXPERIENCE

Community Service (work helping people in the local community)

I was reluctant to go there on that first day, and as I waited outside the director's office, my anxiety only increased. My legs felt like lead. "There" was a rehabilitation residence for mentally and physically ill people. My dad, a doctor, had insisted on my volunteering at the residence. He wanted my high school community service requirement to be filled in a productive way. I felt the same. The previous summer I had gardened and picked up trash, activities that didn't really seem to make the meaningful difference that I thought I wanted to make. Still, I was scared imagining what the realities of working at the residence would be. The director was brief. She told me about the need to establish emotional connections with the residents, then rushed to introduce me to a group of 15, their ages ranging from 8 to 21, that I was asked to supervise. My charges welcomed me graciously. Some tried to clap but couldn't bring both hands together; some tried to say hello, but their speech was so impaired that I really only guessed at what they said. Most conspicuous among them was Young-il. He was older than I, and he was the only one who spoke clearly enough for me to understand fully. Young-il had the face of a 30 year-old, but he was barely four feet tall. He took me in charge at first and, stumbling as he walked, showed me around and taught me the basics of the residents' routine. I was embarrassed when he told me what to do; to be frank, I felt as if I were being instructed by a child. Later, thinking back on my condescension toward that kind, intelligent man, I felt a much deeper embarrassment.

The youngest was Sung-Min. He was eight years old, only three feet tall, and his fingers were all odd shapes and sizes. A teacher told me that Sung-Min's fingers used to be fused, but he had recently had an operation. Sung-Min now had five discrete digits on each hand, but their irregular forms still made it very hard for him to grasp things. In spite of his physical struggles, Sung-Min was the brightest and most energetic person at the residence. On my second day of work, he was the first to greet me, something I was grateful for, since not all of the residents remembered my face.

Helping at lunch was my most difficult task. It required considerable patience. Some residents had trouble focusing on eating and would often start shaking their heads violently as I tried to feed them. But whatever their physical challenges and discomforts were and however unappealing the food was, none of the residents ever complained. I couldn't help contrasting the residents' behavior with mine. I was again embarrassed to think about my regular pickiness, my refusal to eat this or that or at all, my demands for particular foods; and I began to hope that the road to wisdom was paved with such small embarrassments.

After my first lunch at the residence, a teacher took over the group. Everyone in the room said goodbye in his own way, and Sung-Min, the little guy with the mismatched fingers, accompanied me to the door and hugged my knees. I walked home, my legs much lighter than they had been that morning. My fears and worries had disappeared; in their place were the surprising beginnings of an emotional connection that I had thought was beyond me. I was looking forward to seeing the residents again, to helping them, I hoped, and having them help me.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Jun-Min Kim's father is a doctor? (True/False) (1)
2. The residents of the rehabilitation home were mostly men (True/False) (1)
3. Did the director of the residence think it was necessary that Jun-Min Kim learn sign language or establish an emotional connection to work with the residence? (2)
4. Who was the youngest resident at home? (1)
5. What was Jun-Min Kim's most difficult assignment? (2)
6. Why did Jun-Min Kim's father want him to work at the residence? (2)
7. The institution that Jun-Min Kim worked was:
 - a) A hospital
 - b) A school
 - c) A rehabilitation residence
 - d) A job training centre (1)
8. How did most the residence communicate with Jun? (2)
9. Sung-Min hugged Jun's leg:
 - a) Because they were playing a game
 - b) Because he wanted to be fed
 - c) To help him understand the resident's daily routine
 - d) As his way of saying goodbye (1)
10. Did the residents only play or did they also study? (2)
11. Why did Jun feel as if was being instructed by a child when Young-il taught him about the residence? (3)
12. Imagine that next summer Jun is offered the opportunity to either return to his volunteer work at the residence or to participate in a foreign-language study program abroad. Which do you think he would choose and why? (3)
13. While feeding the residents, Jun is embarrassed remembering his own behavior at mealtimes. Do you think that Jun will change the way he behaves and why? (3)
14. How do you feel about Jun? Do you like him? (3)
15. Would you like to or be willing to volunteer at the residence? Why? (3)

[TOTAL=30]

Glossary:

Assignment – task

Resident - house

Abroad- overseas

Conspicuous- noticeable

Discreet- separate

Graciously- kindly

Unappealing- unattractive

Reluctant – hesitant

Rehabilitation- recondition

Appendix 3 (e): A copy of learners photo in a classroom



Appendix 4: Transcripts for focus group interviews of learners

Appendix 4 (a): 1st Interview (in *IsiXhosa*)

(Educator : Educ.)

(Learner : Lrnr)

Thina senze izifundo ezininzi ezibonisa ukusetyenziswa kwe comprehension strategies xa sisenza i Comprehension. Into ebangela ukuba ndinifundise nge comprehension strategies, ndizama ukuphucula indlela yenu yokufunda nokuba nikwazi ukufunda into eniyiqondayo.

Ngoku ke ndizakunibuza imibuzo malunga nezifundo ezi sizenzileyo. Ndicela nithethe ngoku khululekileyo, umntu athethele phezulu. Ndicela ukuva kuni ukuba ndinibuze ngoluphi ulwimi - ngesixhosa okanye ngesiNgesi? (Abafundi bonke:- N

Educ: Umfundi ngamnye ndicela atsho igam lakhe, neminyaka yakhe. Mandiqale ngawe wena uhleli ecaleni kwa, xa ugqiba omnye alandele.

Lrnr: Ndingu ndineminyaka eyi 13.

Lrnr: Ndingu ndineminyaka eyi 13.

Lrnr: Ndingu ndineminyaka eyi 14.

Lrnr: Ndingu ndineminyaka eyi 13.

Lrnr: Ndingu ndineminyaka eyi 14.

Lrnr: Ndingu ndineminyaka eyi 13.

Educ: Singekabheki phambili makhe siqale apha. Ingaba niyasithanda na isiNgesi? Niyakuthanda ukufundiswa ngaso okanye nisifunda kuba ninyanzelekile?

Lrnr: Andisithandi tu isiNgesi ndisifunda kuba kunyanzelekile. Mna ndithanda *isiXhosa* ngoba ukupasa kuxhomekeke kuso.

Lrnr: Mna ndiyasithanda kuba siza kundinceda ndikwazi ukuthetha nezinye intlanga.

Lrnr: Ndiyasithanda kuba zonke iLearning Areas zifundiswa ngaso.

Educ: Ingaba ninyaqala ukuva ngestrategies zokufunda isicatshulwa? Makuphendule

abe mnye ngexesha.

Lnr: Mna bendikhe ndafunda ngesummary (abanye bonke bayaqala ukuva ngecomprehension strategies).

Educ: Ukuqala kwethu ukufunda nge comprehension strategies - ingaba benizilandela okanye beningaqondi kakuhle?

Lnr: Bendilahleke mpela ndingazi nokuba kuqhubeka ntoni kuba ndiyaqala ukuva ngezi Strategies.

Lnr: Nam bendingaqondi kuba andinalwazi ngezi strategies of reading comprehension.

Lnr: Nangona ndiqala ukuva ngazo kodwa bendi excited ukuva into entsha so ndaqonda ukuba ndizakumamela kakuhle.

Educ: Ukuba nindivile naziqonda ezindlela zokufunda icomprehension, sesiphi okanye zeziphi izistrategies eniziqondayo?

Lnr: Mna ndithanda isummary

Lnr: Ndithanda ivocabulary knowledge. Xa ungalazi igama uske ulijonge kwidictionary. Hula ke lonto.

Lnr: Mna ndithanda isurvey, ilula kakhulu kum kuba ufunda nje iparagraph yokuqala neyo kugqibela ufumane i-idea yokuba kuqhubeka ntoni kwisicatshulwa.

Lnr: Mna ndithanda ivocabulary yenza kube lula ukufunda isicatshulwa ndisive. Amagama endingawaziyo ndiyawafumana kwi-dictionary inkcazelo yawo.

Lnr: Kusenzima kum andikaqondi ncam, akukho strategy ndingathi silula kuba akululanga nokufuna imeaning yegama kuba ziba ninzi.

Educ: Alright, qho xa ndigqiba kufundisa ndiya buza ukuba nindivile na,

niyalandela

na? kodwa wonke umntu athi "yes". Xa ndibuza imibuzo bathi cwaka abafundi, kutheni?

- Lnr: Uxolo Miss, xa ubuza ukuba sivile na, akho mntu ufuna ukuthi akevanga ngokuba uzakube umbuza imibuzo, ngoku sikhethe ukuthi sivile soyika ukushawutwa. Ngamanye amaxesha siyahlekana, uba uthe awuva kuzothiwa usisidenge.
- Lnr: Abanye manyani abeva tu isiNgesi babenentloni zokutsho.
- Lnr: Ngamanye amaxesha uyayazi impendulo qha woyika abanye abafundi kuba bazakukugxeka xa emkile utitshala bathi uzenza bhetele.
- Educ: Ndithini, ndenze njani ukuze wonke umntu ave, azi?
- Lnr: Xa ugqiba kutitsha sinike iclasswork.
- Lnr: Xa ufundisa mix *isiXhosa* nesiNgesi. Cacisa *ngesiXhosa* kakhulu sakuva sonke.
- Lnr: Buza umntu ngamnye ngamnye ukuba uve ntoni - atsho lento ayivileyo.
- Lnr: Mna ndicimba ungabuza aba ubaqondayo uba abazi. Babuze uba yeyiphi indawo umntu angeva kuyo, uyiphinda phinde de bazi.

Appendix 4 (b): English Translation

We had many lessons on comprehension strategies, showing how to use them when reading English text. The purpose of such lessons was to help you to read comprehension with understanding.

Now, I am going to ask you questions concerning what we did in the classroom (i.e. comprehension strategies). One, I would like you to speak freely, without any fear. Secondly, I would like you to speak loud and clear during the interview. Thirdly, which language do you prefer to be interviewed on - *isiXhosa* or English? [Chorus - *isiXhosa*]

Educ: Firstly, tell me what is your name and how old are you? Let me start with the one sitting next to me - when you finish, the next learner must follow.

Lrn: I am..... I am 13 yrs old.

Lrn: My name is I am 13 yrs old.

Lrn: I am..... I am 14 yrs old.

Lrn: I am..... I am 13 yrs old.

Lrn: My name is I am 14 yrs old.

Lrn: I am..... I am 13 yrs old.

Educ: Before we go any further, I would like to know whether you like English or not. Do you like to be taught in English or you learn it because you have no choice?

Lrn: I don't like English. I learn it because I have no choice. The language I like is *isiXhosa* because in order to pass to the next grade you need to pass it.

Lrn: I like English because it will help me to communicate with people who are foreigners.

Lrn: I like English because all Learning Areas are taught in English.

Educ: Did you ever learn about Comprehension Strategies in your previous schools?

Chorus: N... N... No Mam (showing uncertainty).

Educ: Ok, let's give each other chance to answer for himself/herself

Lrn: Yes, I was taught how to summarize.

[Others said it was the first time they were taught about comprehension strategies]

- Educ: When I started teaching strategies for reading comprehension - did you understand or not; or you were confused?
- Lnr: I was lost because it was for the first time being taught these strategies.
- Lnr: I was confused; I had no knowledge of strategies of reading comprehension. I did not understand at all.
- Lnr: I was excited to learn something new so I listened very well.
- Educ: If you understood, which strategy or strategies you know well?
- Lnr: I like summary writing.
- Lnr: I like doing vocabulary - when you don't know a word, you check it from a dictionary. It's simple.
- Lnr: I like survey because you only read the first and the last paragraph and you get an idea of what is happening in the text.
- Lnr: All strategies to me are still difficult, even vocabulary that seems simple it's not to me because it's not easy to find the exact meaning of a word. There are many meanings of one word in a dictionary.
- Educ: Alright, whenever I finish teaching each strategy I ask, "Did you understand what I taught?" All of you say- Yes but when I ask questions no one answers - why?
- Lnr: Sorry Miss, when you ask if we understand - no one want to be seen or known by other students that he/she doesn't understand, if we can say we don't - you would ask us many questions. We are afraid of being shouted at.
- Lnr: Others keep quite because they don't understand English and they are shy.
- Lnr: Sometimes you know the answer but you are afraid of other learners because when a teacher leaves the classroom they come to you and say you think you are better than us.
- Educ: Ok. What must I do or how should I teach in order for all learners to understand?
- Lnr: When you finish teaching, give us a class work.
- Lnr: Use both English and *isiXhosa*. Explain more in *isiXhosa* we will understand.

Lrn: Ask each learner, what did you understand?

Lrn: I think you can ask only those you know that they don't understand. Ask them what they understood, if they don't talk - then explain it many times until they understand.

Appendix 4(c): 2nd interview

Educ- educator

Q- Question

L- Learner

Educ: This is our last interview on the whole programme of teaching comprehension strategies! have few questions to ask this time. Again I would like you to be open and tell the truth. Your comments will help me a lot.

Q: At the beginning you worked as groups, but at the end you worked as an individual. Did you cope with the activities when you worked alone?

L: It was easy to me, no one to argue with whether you are wrong or right.

L: It was difficult at first when you separated us. It was not easy but i got used to that.

L: I liked my group. I did not like it when you said; you are going to work alone now.

Educ: I asked you to work as individuals because I wanted to find out if you understood what we were doing.

Q: which strategy/ strategies you found difficult?

Chorus: Summary (yhuu). (Yhu is an exclamation)

Q: What was so difficult about it?

L: When summarizing you think and think.

L: There were many points in a paragraph. It was not easy to select one and I ended up not knowing what to do.

L: it is not nice. It makes me angry it is difficult.

[I used extracts from NS and HSS to show learners a table form method of summarizing] Q:

When I introduced you to a table form method of summarizing, did you understand it? L: I

liked it, it is better than writing those sentences. L: Those columns made it a bit easier to see

where each point fits. L: I did not like table form I like writing sentences. Q: Do you use

these strategies when you study other learning areas? Chorus: Yes, they help us.

L: Yes, I use summary when I study EMS. It has many notes then I summarize each paragraph and it becomes easy to me.

Q: What about other strategies we used?

L: Vocabulary development was better when we had dictionaries.

L: To me surveying is like summarizing so I do not like it.

L: I did not like surveying at first but I like it now.

Appendix 5: Interview transcripts for non-participant observer

Appendix 5 (a): 1st interview for non-participant observer

R- Researcher

NPO- Non-Participant Observer

I take this opportunity to thank you for availing yourself firstly observing the lessons I taught in grade 8 and looking at everything happened in the classroom. Secondly, thank you for accepting my request to interview you. Your views and comments on what you observed will first additional teacher and to help rural learners to read comprehension with understanding. Our interview is guided by questions; feel free to talk because I need your contribution.

R: What was the lesson/s about?

NPO: Firstly I observed a lesson on comprehension strategies namely; surveying (skimming strategy) you introduced to learners. It was a good lesson because it gave them the easiest way of learning - to get an idea about the text they read. Also teaching vocabulary was important so that the learners may acquire more English words. I liked more the teaching of summary writing because it provokes thinking.

R: What made the lesson successful/ unsuccessful?

NPO: The learners are seated in groups and that is what OBE stresses so that learners could help each other. Also the fact that in each group you placed those hard working learners made most of the groups to be active. Those who were not partaking were immediately exposed. I saw that they were able to delegate tasks among themselves. Learners were hands on to their activity and you were moving from group to group helping them.

As you teach remember that you are dealing with grade 8 learners fresh from the primary schools, your English must be on their level. As I observed I saw that they do not understand and as they said that it was their first time to hear about skimming a text. That is why when you asked a question there was total silence.

The lesson on vocabulary development was exciting when you firstly taught them dictionary skills and gave them copies of a dictionary page for reference but when you asked them to do an activity that needed dictionaries yet they had no dictionaries; I knew that there'll be a problem. There can't be vocabulary enrichment without consulting a dictionary. You are

heading for a big problem; the task will never be finished on one day. There will be hiccups/ upheavals. Few learners had dictionaries. As it is you have a big challenge, these learners won't have dictionaries. You have to tell the principal about this situation, you may not achieve what you wanted to achieve. Did you notice how they flocked on one dictionary, pushing each other? No, no, no, something must be done to save the situation.

Although most learners have no dictionaries, they showed interest to what they were doing because they grouped around the ones who had dictionaries to look for the meaning of words themselves.

I was impressed seeing that you made a glossary for learners. This is a brilliant idea, continue with it as long as they don't have dictionaries and the school hasn't bought the dictionaries.

I liked the fact that you used the same comprehension text so that learners get to know and understand the text. If the learners were good in English language it would have been easy to do summary. It was not easy for them to summarize. They lacked understanding on what was happening in the text. They took a long time reading the passage and they could not finish their task. Few groups that managed to come up with facts, the rest is unable to see facts from the passage.

R: What need to be improved?

NPO: Use simple English as you can when you teach these learners, come down to their level. You used words like 'predict and brainstorm' and grade 8's are not familiar with such words. Learn to translate what you say in *isiXhosa* if you want them to understand what you say. As an English teacher take an initiative to request the committee responsible for learning support material to purchase a number of dictionaries that could be affordable.

When teaching summary, read the passage aloud first, explain certain words and phrases that helps them to understand.

There were learners who did not participate who were difficult, ask them more questions until they develop a good attitude that a question can be posed to them and an answer is expected.

Teach one strategy at a time for weeks so that your learners may understand.

Appendix 5 (b): 2nd interview - Non-Participant Observer

Sir, this is the last time I conduct interview with you. You observed me at the initial stages of the programme, in the middle and on the last lesson. I would like you to compare and comment about everything. We still use the same questions.

R: What was the lesson about?

NPO: Before I get to your question I want to congratulate you because I have seen an improvement to your learners. I observed all three strategies again. Some learners seem to understand or have an idea of what was happening. Few whom you can see that they still struggle. The lesson on vocabulary was good and most learners were actively involved. They seemed to like the new method you used for summary writing and most of them finished on time.

R: What made the lesson/s successful/unsuccessful?

NPO: I want to comment more on vocabulary. The fact that dictionaries were bought minimized the problem. I could see that you used different methods of teaching vocabulary: match words - that was the best. I think you used a good approach because it stimulates thinking. Also the vocabulary cards you used were a good idea, training the learners to retain information. The approaches you used I will also use them when teaching vocabulary in *isiXhosa*. I have also gained.

I think it was a good idea to teach learners summary writing at an early stage. This will cause them to be able to take notes in all learning areas. The fact that you used other Learning Areas when teaching summary, that will also make them aware that English is vital to all Learning Areas. It will help them to be able to select important information.

R: What needed to be improved?

NPO: Again take one strategy for example surveying, for about a week or so, drill it until you are determined that all the learners have grasped the lesson and the vitality of it.

Secondly, when dealing with vocabulary, do different kinds of vocabulary development for weeks, and ascertain how the development proceed and give them challenging tasks sometimes based on word puzzles.

It is a pity that you are working on a programme that must be finished on due time, otherwise you should drill your learners over a period of time, using all different types of writing summaries. Definitely there could be a great improvement. The learners are keen to learn, they are interested.

Appendix 6: Learner questionnaires

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. At home, do you have access to the following?

Magazine, novel, short stories, poetry, newspaper.

2. Which language do you like to read most?

Xhosa English

3. Do you like reading comprehension?

Yes No

4. Were you taught reading comprehension strategies from your previous school?

Yes No

5. If Yes, what are they?

Vocabulary
Summary

6. Being introduced to those three strategies of reading comprehension, how did you cope with them?

In the beginning they were all difficult and hard to understand but now they are easier to understand. Sometimes it's difficult because you have to look at the important parts of the text. Table form is easier.

7. Which strategy/strategies you understand better?

Summary because you just look at the title, subheadings, first sentences, first paragraph and the last paragraph.

8. What do you think the teacher should do in order for you to understand those strategies?

She should teach one strategy at a time. At the moment she teaches them all at once. My case is Xhosa.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. At home, do you have access to the following?

Magazine, novel, short stories, poetry, newspaper.

2. Which language do you like to read most?

Xhosa English

3. Do you like reading comprehension?

Yes No

4. Were you taught reading comprehension strategies from your previous school?

Yes No

5. If Yes, what are they?

Vocabulary
Summary

6. Being introduced to those three strategies of reading comprehension, how did you cope with them?

In the beginning they were all
difficult and confusing but
now they are easier. Summary sometimes
is difficult because you have to look at the
important parts of the text. table form is easier.

7. Which strategy/strategies you understand better?

Summary because you just look at the title,
subheadings, first sentences, first paragraph
and the last paragraph.

8. What do you think the teacher should do in order for you to understand those strategies?

She should teach one strategy at a time.
At the beginning in English. Kugala then
my exercise in Xhosa.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. At home, do you have access to the following?

Magazine, novel, short stories, poetry, newspaper.

2. Which language do you like to read most?

Xhosa English

3. Do you like reading comprehension?

Yes No

4. Were you taught reading comprehension strategies from your previous school?

Yes No

5. If Yes, what are they?

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

6. Being introduced to those three strategies of reading comprehension, how did you cope with them ?

It confuses me and Summary writing
is very hard for me. I don't understand
it yet.

7. Which strategy/strategies you understand better?

The strategy I understand is Vocabulary
development.

8. What do you think the teacher should do in order for you to understand those strategies?

is make the easy way to teach those
strategies, and ask if the learner understand it.
to not speak the bombastic word to under-
stand, what she/he talk about.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. At home, do you have access to the following?

Magazine, novel, short stories, poetry, newspaper.

2. Which language do you like to read most?

Xhosa English

3. Do you like reading comprehension?

Yes No

4. Were you taught reading comprehension strategies from your previous school?

Yes No

5. If Yes, what are they?

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

6. Being introduced to those three strategies of reading comprehension, how did you cope with them ?

.....
I have not met them here in high school.
.....

7. Which strategy/strategies you understand better?

.....
Vocabulary
.....

8. What do you think the teacher should do in order for you to understand those strategies?

.....
It needs more of English
.....

9. Did the teaching of the strategies of reading comprehension help you? In what way? Comment.

Yes, to read with understanding
I just read the whole text and
understand.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. At home, do you have access to the following?

Magazine, novel, short stories, poetry, newspaper.

2. Which language do you like to read most?

Xhosa English

3. Do you like reading comprehension?

Yes No

4. Were you taught reading comprehension strategies from your previous school?

Yes No

5. If Yes, what are they?

Summarily

6. Being introduced to those three strategies of reading comprehension, how did you cope with them?

I found them a little bit hard
since the first one I did not
like. Most of them were
new to me. Only summary

7. Which strategy/strategies you understand better?

Vocabulary and summarily

8. What do you think the teacher should do in order for you to understand those strategies?

The teacher should ask each
one a question every day. She
was alone that teaching
the strategy if she had
understood what she was already
taught/teacher

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. At home, do you have access to the following?

Magazine, novel, short stories, poetry, newspaper.

2. Which language do you like to read most?

Xhosa

English

3. Do you like reading comprehension?

Yes

No

4. Were you taught reading comprehension strategies from your previous school?

Yes

No

5. If Yes, what are they?

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

6. Being introduced to those three strategies of reading comprehension, how did you cope with them ?

They were difficult to understand when we started them but they were easier as the year. The strategy is summarizing it as I didn't understand the task from a month ago than the point form.

7. Which strategy/strategies you understand better?

Vocabulary because it was taught the strategy in my previous school.

8. What do you think the teacher should do in order for you to understand those strategies?

Teach them in a more simple way so that every I can understand them better than I do.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. At home, do you have access to the following?

Magazine, novel, short stories, poetry, newspaper.

2. Which language do you like to read most?

Xhosa English

3. Do you like reading comprehension?

Yes No

4. Were you taught reading comprehension strategies from your previous school?

Yes No

5. If Yes, what are they?

.....

6. Being introduced to those three strategies of reading comprehension, how did you cope with them?

Summary writing is hard to me very hard
 it's not easy to summarize in point form
 ukufunda kungakumbi kakhulu kuba kholakile
 ukufunda kungakumbi kakhulu kuba kholakile

7. Which strategy/strategies you understand better?

Surfing is easy to me

8. What do you think the teacher should do in order for you to understand those strategies?

Utatshela nika funo ye-jabete ngayo
 ayanga njalo njalo uyaka aphele ngayo

9. Did the teaching of the strategies of reading comprehension help you? In what way? Comment.

Zindincedile ngaba ndiye ndikha wleze
ukuyitumana lento ibalweyo waye amohacide
ngawo ukuba into endiyfundayo iyizigebese
luba engokwenyam

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. At home, do you have access to the following?

Magazine, novel, short stories, poetry, newspaper.

2. Which language do you like to read most?

Xhosa English

3. Do you like reading comprehension?

Yes No

4. Were you taught reading comprehension strategies from your previous school?

Yes No

5. If Yes, what are they?

.....
Vocabulary
Summary
.....

6. Being introduced to those three strategies of reading comprehension, how did you cope with them?

.....
In the beginning they were all
difficult and confusing but
now they are easier. Summary
sometimes it's difficult because you had to look at the
important parts of the text. Table form is easier.
.....

7. Which strategy/strategies you understand better?

.....
Survey because you just look at the title,
subheadings, first sentences, first paragraph
and the last paragraph.
.....

8. What do you think the teacher should do in order for you to understand those strategies?

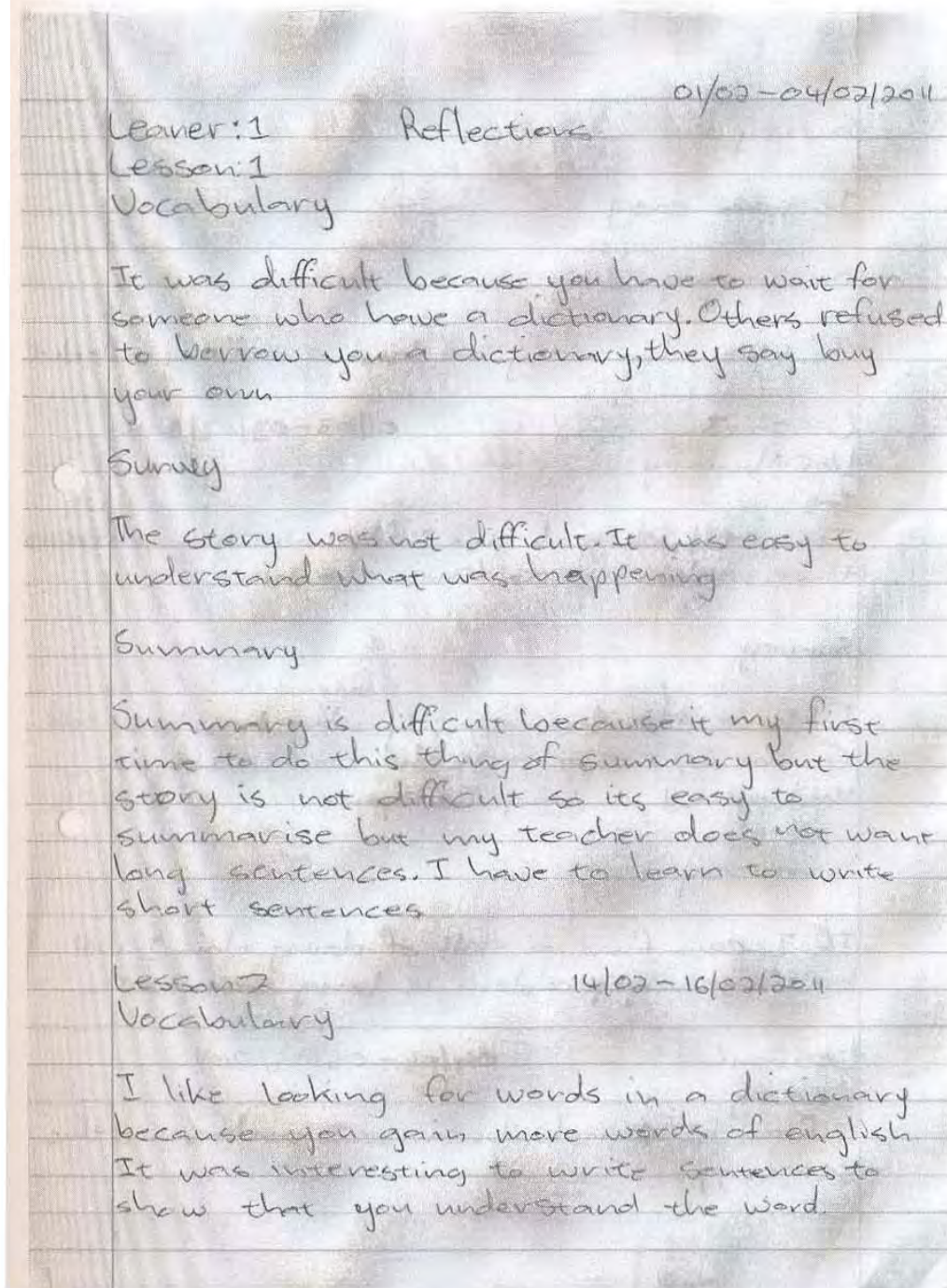
.....
He should teach one strategy at a time.
At the use English, Kuzala then
ayicacise egesiXhosa.
.....

Appendix 7: Research Journals

Appendix 7 (a): learners' Journals

Appendix 7: Research journals

Appendix 7a: Learners' journals



Survey

It was easy

Summary

It was also easy we had questions to look at

Lesson 3

01/03-03/03/2011

Vocabulary

Its

Its still ok with me I like writing sentences that makes me to know the word

Survey

I like it I've done exactly what has been told to me its easier. it is the easiest way to understand a comprehension

Summary

If I can find a skill of doing this I will be fine my problem is long sentences

Lesson 4

04/04-06/04/2011

Survey

I find it simple because I understand this strategy

Vocabulary

Its still confusing one word has many meanings. In this activity I thought I knew the meanings of those words but they came out the way I didn't think they would come out

Summary

The comprehension is not difficult I need to learn to write short sentences.

Lesson 5

18/07 - 20/07/2011

Survey

I understand survey I have no problem

Vocabulary

Vocabulary strategy is easy now that I have a dictionary. This strategy helped me to know how to use a dictionary and to understand words. If I don't get the word correct I take a dictionary and look for its meaning

Summary

I find table form very easy for me. It was not easy for me to squash a long paragraph into a short sentence but summarizing with point form is easier

Lesson 6 01/08 - 03/08/2011

Survey

I like it because it makes it easy to understand the comprehension

Vocabulary

I enjoyed this one. It's interesting to see a person think when he forgets the word. I like this kind of learning vocabulary.

Summary

It is easy and interesting. I understand it better. I enjoyed it very well.

REFLECTIONS

01/02 - 04/2011

LEARNER 2

Lesson 1

Vocabulary

The story was simple and I understand the words because I had a dictionary

Survey

We were taught how to survey and the story was simple so it was easy to get to know what the story is about

Summary

It is difficult at this moment maybe it will be easy through the year. I never done summary maybe that's why it's difficult

Lesson 2

14/02 - 16/02/2011

Vocabulary

It was not easy this time to write sentences. I had to think what to write

Survey

It was easy

Summary

I get the idea of what I must do. I must write shorter sentences

Summary

We still used table form and it was good

01/02 - 04/02/2011

Reflections

LEARNER #3

Lesson 1

Vocabulary

The activity was simple. It was clearly explained and I had a dictionary

Survey

Because it was my first time to hear about this strategy I don't like it very well

Summary

It was first time summarising in short sentence. I like it but its hard. It teach me to shorten words

Lesson 2 14/02 - 16/02/2011

Vocabulary

This activity made us think a lot. I am used to this method but I want to learn it

Survey

It was easy we repeated the same story so it was easy to survey

Summary

I am getting used to this strategy. It

Makes you think

Lesson 3. 01/03 - 03/03/2011

Vocabulary

I like this strategy it help me to know many words and understand them

Survey

I like this strategy a bit it makes things easier

Lesson 4 04/04 - 06/06/2011

Survey

The story was explained it was easy. It was easy to find what happened in paragraph 1 & 2

Vocabulary

It was ok but I had to think. This type of vocabulary was too much work but I like it

Summary

I find it hard when teacher said we must use our own words. I like to ~~but not that~~ ~~could use every line~~ take a sentence in the paragraph. Still I

Lesson 5 18/07 - 06/04/2011

Survey

I found it easy cause I'm used to survey.
I like it but not that could use it every day
time

Vocabulary

I am use now to this method. I like it

~~Summary~~ Survey

The story was interesting and it was easy for
me to know what happens in the story first
and the last. pair graph

Lesson 6 01/08 - 03/08/2011

Summary

I did not understand this method first but I
got it and I know it. I like it.

Vocabulary

This was good my partner did not know
many word I laughed at him. We must do it
again.

Summary

I like history I find it easy to summarise
table form it easy I like it

LEARNER 4

REFLECTIONS

01/02 - 04/02/2011

Lesson 1

Vocabulary

The story was hard, there are words I don't understand and I have no dictionary

Survey

It was not easy survey this passage. I didn't understand it

Summary

The story was not easy and I didn't do it in my previous school but I tried to summarize

Lesson 2

14/02 - 16/02/2011

Vocabulary

The story was easy this time. We do it the second time but writing your sentence using those words

Survey

I knew this strategy a little bit

Lesson 3

01/03 - 02/02/2011

reading words asking one another

Summary

I liked table form from start its simple than
writing sentences

Learner #5

Reflections 01/02

Lesson 1

01/02-04/02/2011

Vocabulary

I don't like look meaning of words it is difficult.
I have no dictionary. Survey

Survey

I was using my mind and think. No i didn't understand but i tried I cant. No i don't understand strategy

Summary

Too difficult I didn't know how to put paragraph in small word

Lesson 2

14/02-16/02/2011

Vocabulary

The passage is hard, to look meaning of words. was hard I have no dictionary. the word I still not know

Survey

It make me think I still not understand

Summary

It was difficult I don't know the other paragraph
It is too difficult of reading comprehension

Lesson 3

01/03 - 03/03/2011

Vocabulary

Its not easy using word in a sentence

Survey

I start to understand it

Summary

Summary is a problem. you think too much

Lesson 4

04/04 - 06/04/2011

Survey

I understand the strategy but I don't understand
comprehension

Vocabulary

I have dictionary now I still learn how to use it

Summary

I can't find this activity. I don't understand English
my father tell me but I don't understand

Lesson 5

18/07 - 20/07/2011

Vocabulary

Its easy with dictionary I can look meaning of words

Survey

I understand it now

Summary

I don't like this table form when summary writing

Lesson 6

01/08 - 03/08/2011

Survey

I don't like it first but I like it now because it help
to quickly understand

Vocabulary

I hated vocabulary when I have no dictionary now
I have dictionary its easy and I like it

Summary

To me its better writing sentences not table form

LEARNER 6 REFLECTIONS 01/02-04/02
Lesson 1

Vocabulary

It was difficult

Survey

No because I don't understand

Summary

It was difficult because I tried I couldn't understand English but I teach myself

Lesson 2

14/02-16/02/2011

Vocabulary

Difficult

Survey

Not understood

Summary

Words make no understanding

Lesson 3

01/03/2011-03/03/2011

Vocabulary

Too hard

Survey

Not now

Summary

Difficult

Lesson 4

04/04/2011-06-06-

Survey

I understood little things. I understood little parts

aphs. I don't understand small paragraph

vocabulary

Not nice

summary

Not easy to me

lessons

18/07-20-07-2011

Survey

names I don't understand

vocabulary

is hard to me

summary

the strategy is hard to me

Lesson 6

01/08-2011-03-08-2011

Survey

164

Not easy

Appendix 7b: Researcher's journal

Reflection: Pre-intervention assessment

31 January 2011

I told the learners on the previous day that they will write a test the following day. When I gave them the test they looked surprised. I gave them a comprehension text which I thought it was simple and it had pictures that could help them understand the story. They took a long time reading the story. I had to remind them to start writing and I was panicking about time. Some were unable to finish during my period which was 50 minutes and I requested 10 minutes more from the teacher that was after me.

After marking their test I saw that the learners really needed a serious attention because the text and its questions were not difficult. Their scores were so low; they could hardly get 50%. Although their results were disappointing, I was able to identify the strong learners, average learners and weak learners.

Researcher's daily journal

Lesson 1- day 1 vocabulary development

01 February 2011

I re-arranged the learners taking strong learners to be leaders in each group, and then we started the lesson.

For prior knowledge the learners were asked questions based on dictionary skills. The majority of learners did not have knowledge of dictionary skills, few answered the questions. I had to start teaching dictionary skills preparing them for vocabulary development as they would use dictionaries a lot. Copies of dictionaries were distributed to learners using their leaders so that they could see what they were taught. During the lesson, the learners were tense. It was not easy for them. When I asked a question, few learners raised their hands. I gave them two sentences with difficult words on the chalkboard so that they use the skill. As I moved around each group I noticed that they picked any meaning that did not fit in the sentences. I scaffolded each group correcting the mistakes some did. We quickly did feedback on the board to emphasise what I said in the groups.

In the key task, the English text was given to learners to identify words they did not understand and they were asked to take out their dictionaries as they were requested to bring them. I had my greatest shock to find only four learners with dictionaries. I had to leave the classroom to check for dictionaries I could get in the office. The learners were noisy as they were grouping around those who had dictionaries. As I was moving from group to group monitoring them I noticed that they picked any word. There was one learner who picked 'their' as the word he did not understand. I saw that I was dealing with a serious problem. Learners could not finish their task. I was frustrated but the situation was beyond control at that stage. The situation left me with a huge task, thinking on what do to make the next lesson on vocabulary successful. The lesson was not be finished, I had to continue with it tomorrow so that all learners could finish their task.

Lesson 1-Day 2 Vocabulary development

02 February 2011

Learners had to continue with the task to finish up. I did a glossary of words I thought they would not understand. Also, I wanted them to work quickly because their pace was too slow yesterday.

Lesson 1-Day 3 Surveying

03 February 2011

On this day we started marking the work done. During feedback the strong learners were active giving their words and meanings. Some were hiding, they were afraid to be asked. It was clear that learners were still unable to use dictionaries.

I introduced the learners to a second strategy - surveying (skimming and scanning). Learners practiced surveying using the same comprehension. The learners were struggling to get an idea of what the first and the last paragraph meant. They were confused. In their groups, the learners discussed in *isiXhosa*. Some were not contributing in the groups. As some learners were not contributing in the groups, the group leaders mandated other learners to write their own sentences and read them to the group. Such a skill surprised me

During presentation one could see that some did not understand at all despite being helped.

Lesson 1 - Day 4 Summarizing**04 February 2011**

I told the learners to use the skill that was used by other groups so that each member of the group contributes. I introduced them to summary writing. As I taught them they seemed to understand. It was their time to practice the strategy. Learners were stuck and I had to scaffold them. They told me that summary writing was not easy. The learners were not used in this strategy. The activity on extracting facts from the passage seemed too difficult for them. I had to probe them with questions in order to talk. Although I used the same passage some learners did not cope. I felt pity for them because they wanted to learn and understand but English was the problem. I had to think on what to do in order to for them to understand.

Lesson 2 - Day 1 Vocabulary development**14 February 2011**

I used the same text as in lesson 1 for all the activities in lesson 2. The learners who had no dictionaries were given glossaries.

Learners worked individually within a group and shared their sentences in their groups. Some learners' sentences were still of poor quality. They lacked basic language skills. Their pace had improved, maybe it was because we dealt with same text.

I liked to see that they were tolerant of each other in their groups.

Lesson 2 - Day 2 Surveying**15 February 2011**

A brief revision of surveying was done. I modelled how to survey using the title of the text. The learners were asked to do surveying again on the first and the last paragraph of the text. Learners were actively involved. The average learners contributed a lot. They seemed to have gained confidence.

I had a group of boys who were slow and not improving. During presentation I saw that some groups had improved, their sentences had meaning. More assistance was needed to the slow group.

Lesson2 - Day 3 Summarizing

16 February 2011

I started by re-arranging the group of boys only, mixing them with girls.

I think using the same passage had a positive impact to the learners. They were free to share their ideas. In some groups, learners were able to identify facts in the text although they still struggled to use their own words when writing their sentences. Their pace had improved.

Lesson 3 - Day 1 Vocabulary development

01 March 2011

I used the group leaders to hand out the text with glossaries to their group members. I asked them to read the passage first before doing vocabulary development.

Their pace today was slow again; most of them were slow readers and were not conscious of time. I noticed that when they had a first encounter with the passage they took time to relate with it. Also it was not easy for them to write their own sentences using the given words. I had to be patient with them and help them build their sentences. Apart from that there were groups with good sentences. During feedback I asked the groups with good sentences to read them for the class so that the other groups might know what was expected.

As most learners had a low level of understanding English and I learnt not rush them otherwise I would miss the point. I had to give the weaker learners English story books to try and alleviate the problem.

Lesson3 - Day 2 Surveying

02 March 2011

I did not give them a chance to waste time today. After giving them instructions I started monitoring them. I allowed them to discuss in their home language although that posed a problem in terms of developing learners' in English language. The strong learners were of good help to me. They kept on reminding others what I said and exposed those who were not cooperative. Groups managed to present their ideas even if they were not that good.

Lesson3 - Day 3 Summarizing**03 March 2011**

Some learners summarized the text using guiding questions. Some responded positively. They understood the questions and they were free to talk in their discussions. The weaker learners were still struggling with summary writing.

Lesson 4 - Day 1 Surveying**04 April 2011**

On this day I asked learners to work individually to see if there was any personal development in the programme we engaged in. I used a new text during the lesson on surveying. It had a difficult title for their level and I had to explain the meaning of the title before they embark on the activity. Learners found the text interesting. The majority of learners finished on time while the weaker learners were slow.

During report back the learners showed understanding of the first and the last paragraph. I could see that many learners gained understanding of what we were doing. The programme had started to make meaning to them.

Lesson 4 - Day 2 Vocabulary development**05 April 2011**

On this day the learners were still working individually on vocabulary development. I gave them the instruction that they won't use dictionaries at that moment, but they would use them later on, I saw that they were surprised. I modelled what I wanted them to do and they continued with the activity. As I checked their work I found out that some were matching words without giving any thought. Some were serious about their work. They were clever enough to go back to the comprehension passage and read the sentences where the words were taken from in order to understand/guess their meanings.

Learners were asked to exchange their books for marking after they finished their activity. After finishing marking, I asked the group leaders to take dictionaries and give their members to do corrections. I had never seen such an excitement to my learners. They all had dictionaries. They did their corrections with excitement and they finished quickly.

Lesson 4 - Day 3 Summarizing**06 April 2011**

Some learners grasped the summary writing although their sentences were still long. I had to show them on the chalkboard how to get rid of unnecessary words.

I was happy to see that what I wished for had started to take shape. Most learners were accustomed with the programme. They summarized the passage using the guiding questions. What I noticed was that the strong and average learners were confident. I think they had a good training when they worked as groups although some had long sentences.

I saw that the weaker learners were struggling with text. I think they relied too much to their groups.

Many learners were asked to read what they have written and I wrote the best answers on the chalkboard.

Lesson 5 - Day 1 Surveying**18 July 2011**

In this activity the learners were also working individually. I gave them a text from Natural Science. I noticed that they were not crazy about the text. It was dull for them. The leading questions helped them in thinking constructively. They were able to survey the text.

Looking at the weaker learners' work I noticed that some words were not completed and that caused what they had written to be meaningless. I told them to double check words when writing.

Lesson 5-Day 2 Vocabulary development**19 July 2011**

Learners were used in this approach they were no longer surprised. They did the activity individually. After they finished their work, they exchanged the books for peer marking. At least most learners scored better. I noticed that if I repeat the method in any lesson, the learners work freely and with confidence because they are used to the approach. I still have a problem with the weaker learners.

Lesson 5 - Day 3 Summarizing**20 July 2011**

I introduced the learners to tabulating. I modelled how to use the method of summarizing. Surprisingly, learners found tabulating much easier than summarizing using sentences. They liked it. They managed to finish on time when doing their activity. During marking, I and the learners worked together filling in the information in the correct columns.

Lesson 6 - Day 1 Surveying**01 August 2011**

Again learners were asked to work individually. Dictionaries were issued to learners to check the meaning of 'development' and 'NAZI'.

I was impressed by their quietness when they were doing their work. The majority of learners finished on time and they understood what they read regardless of their sentences but as a teacher I understood what they tried to say. Seemingly they enjoyed the HSS text more than NS text. Also I was encouraged when I saw that many wanted to share their ideas with the class despite their language problem.

I made them aware that I had already made arrangements with the principal to use study time to prepare vocabulary cards. For their homework they had to read those words.

Lesson 6 - Day 2 Vocabulary development**02 August 2011**

Learners were asked to read their cards to remind themselves for 5 minutes. They were instructed to work in pairs asking each other those words and their meaning. Learners were cooperative and they had fun. They were relaxed, laughing at each other during the activity; and what was exciting was to see them speaking English. Even the weaker ones were trying their best although they seemed to forget the meaning of other words.

Learners were summarizing still using tabulating which they found easy and interesting. The learners worked individually and I modelled as usual what to do. During the activity learners were calm and were no longer fearful when dealing with summary writing. They were also familiar with tabulating. The majority of learners finished on time and they had to wait for those who were slow so that we made corrections together.

We marked the activity and corrections were written on the chalkboard. We reached the end of the programme on a satisfactory note when learners were showing positive response. Even the weaker learners managed to identify the few events and the year they happened.

Those learners inspired me. As a result I want to continue with the programme, I saw that it could yield to good results in the long run. But there were few who really had a hard time.

Reflection: Post-intervention assessment

08 August 2011

Firstly most learners improved their pace. They were able to finish on time. Also their scores showed improvement. The strong learners scored high marks. There was a huge difference between the pre-intervention assessment scores and the post- intervention assessment scores. That could mean they understood the text with its questions. I think the strong and average learners benefitted a lot in this programme.

Although the weak learners improved from 0% to 16.6%, they still lack understanding of the language or the questions.

