

**Enhancing the critical reading skills of student teachers in  
Namibia: An action research project**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of**

Master of Education

of  
RHODES UNIVERSITY

**by**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis reports on a responsive action research case study undertaken to teach student teachers to read critically. I undertook this research to gain a basic knowledge about critical reading as well as to form a knowledge base that would enable me to teach it effectively.

First, I gave students a diagnostic assessment activity, analyzed the result and established the students' ability to read a text critically. After I had established the students' strengths, weaknesses, and the requirements to move students from their existing critical reading competency to an improved one, I reviewed the literature to provide me with a theory of teaching critical reading. The lessons were then planned and taught.

The lessons; focus group interviews; researcher's diary; students' reflections and non-participant observer comments formed the data of the study. The data were analyzed using the framework of "what went well", "what did not go well" and "what needs to be improved if the lessons were to be repeated". The main purpose was to address the goals of the research, which were to find effective ways of teaching critical reading, appropriate critical reading materials, and to identify any pedagogic shortcomings.

The 30 students who took part in this research were third-year students studying English Second language and Mother tongue pedagogies to become specialists in the teaching of both at Junior Secondary level (grades 8 – 10). The study was guided by constructivist theory, which underpins learner-centred education, which continues to inform and shape the development of curricula in Namibia.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my sons and daughters and my mum Shimbara who have never failed to understand me during the time I studied.

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Secondly, I owe everlasting gratitude to my belated father, Dikuwa Nyangana, who through example planted a seed of hard work; self-belief; persistence and humanity in me that life requires.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the context of the study; it also explains why the study was undertaken. It further describes the research site and briefly presents an overview of the chapters in the thesis.

### 1.2 Context of the study

Around the world, reading instructional styles have changed over the last decades from teachers reading and interpreting for learners to a system where more time is allotted for students to construct meaning from texts. In Namibia, the official Namibian curricula, the BETD - Basic Education Teacher Diploma at the college level, and also at the secondary school level require reading teachers to view and approach reading as both “a thinking, reasoning” activity and a process in which students construct knowledge by “analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, drawing inferences, presenting opinion, and detecting bias”, (Namibia. Ministry of Education, [MoE], 2008:2). This is the context in which I undertook a small-scale action research case study to teach students critical reading.

As will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2, critical reading is an “analytical habit of thinking, reading and listening which goes beneath the surface impressions, traditional myths, mere opinions and routine clichés ...” (Shor, cited in Simpson, 1996:118). Critical reading encourages students to delve into the text, thinking and reading; synthesizing information; evaluating and drawing inferences from a text; analyzing texts or re-examining ideas; re-thinking their stance in light of the text being read and other experiences; analyzing the author’s writing techniques and personally connecting with the text as they read. In that process, the students construct knowledge or develop deeper insights into the text and topic they are dealing with.

In the past, teaching reading took the form of students taking turns to stand up and read a paragraph aloud while others followed in silence and the teacher interpreted the text in light of what the author meant as if the teacher was the co-author. With independence in 1990, Namibia did away with rote learning and adopted a constructivist view of learning and teaching instead.

Schools became places where individuals' thinking ability is developed. The notion of teaching critical reading in which students processed information and constructed knowledge independently became crucial.

### **My motive for carrying out the study**

At the time this research was carried out, I had been an English Communication skills lecturer for nine years at a College of Education. I was teaching four classes, a total of one hundred and twenty students. I met each class once a week for two periods of eighty minutes each. I know that when students enroll at the college they have developed the ability to read and to extract information from a text. It follows that upon joining the College, students need to be helped to read texts critically and become a part of an academic community, entering into discourses where reasoning, interpretation and a critical response are important (Rings, 1994). The term academic here refers to the ability to "integrate information from sources with one's own knowledge and interpreting one's reading/adapting one's writing for a purpose" (Flower, 1989, cited in Rings, 1994, unpagged). Critical reading, like academic reading, involves questioning, looking for assumptions and intentions, analyzing and synthesizing (Richards, 1983, in Rings, 1994). However, my own experience of a traditional view of reading, discussed in more detail in chapter 2, did not provide me with the methodological resources to teach critical reading effectively. In other words, this research was prompted by the discovery that I did not have the necessary knowledge to teach students to read text critically.

The student teachers who participated in this research were all Namibian. Their ages ranged between 20 and 37 years old. They all hailed from the Kavango region, from poorly equipped, rural schools, and had graduated with grade 12 in this region. The majority of these students had a D symbol representing 50% (an admission requirement) in English Second Language at grade 12. A small number of them had a C symbol representing 60%. Most of these students had had twelve years of formal education before joining the college, a small number had, however, studied on their own through NAMCOL (Namibia College of Open Learning). Their level of English language competence ranged from lower intermediate to intermediate. The teachers of these students lacked the knowledge to facilitate critical reading as did the lecturers at college. A student in this study said: "since year 1 to year 3 we were not taught how to read or how to teach reading". Against this background and because of a growing demand for teachers to teach through the medium of English, the Namibian government introduced English Communication

skills at Colleges of Education through which students could be taught “to express their thoughts clearly and concisely” (Namibia. MEC, 2006:30).

As a teacher educator, I am responsible for the development of my students’ reading competency. Teaching students who are training to become teachers, I have come to the realization that I am in a position to improve their reading competency, which might filter through to their learners. It thus follows that whatever the reading background of students prior to transfer to the College of Education, it was of no value to adopt an attitude of blame. The Education Ministry and the students, expect me to act and to make good any reading shortfall of the students in the college where I teach.

The English Communication Skills syllabus required me to help the students to learn to “analyse, interpret, evaluate, and synthesize textual information”, (Namibia. MEC, 2006: unpagged). My perceived experience and expertise as a Junior Secondary English Second Language teacher was the basis on which I was hired to teach at the College of Education. I only had a Senior Primary Education Certificate and a junior degree (Bachelor of Arts). I, myself had not been exposed to better ways of teaching critical reading or reading in general. After I had familiarized myself with the Ministry of Education requirements, I became increasingly aware of the need to change my current practices in the teaching of reading, (Renowden, 2009) and thus undertook an action research study.

### **1.3 The research goals**

The goals, which this research set out to achieve, were:

- finding effective ways of teaching critical reading;
- exploring critical reading materials for that purpose and;
- heightened self-wareness.

### **1.4 Research site**

The research was carried out at Rundu College of Education, located 3 kms East of Rundu, the capital city of the Kavango region. On the eastern side of the administration block of the College is a medium sized library. The library also houses a fair number of books, mainly education

books and reference materials such as encyclopedias and different types of dictionaries. It has an audio room in which a few computers have been installed for community use.

At the time this research was carried out, the college had one student computer laboratory operating but other computers were being installed in a room that used to be a storeroom. Currently, there are eleven classrooms, an arts centre, early childhood development centre, and a language centre, which is not being used for the intended purpose. Eight of the classrooms have storerooms of which some are being utilized as offices for the lecturing staff.

### **1.5. Overview of the study**

This thesis is organized into five chapters:

**Chapter 1:** provides readers with the context of the study, the motive for the study and research site.

**Chapter 2:** presents the research literature and theories that inform the teaching of critical reading and thinking in general. The chapter distinguishes between two different approaches to the teaching of critical reading, and justifies the approach adopted in this study. It then elaborates on the approach and describes in detail its methods and strategies.

**Chapter 3:** explains the research methodology employed and justifies the research methods used.

**Chapter 4:** reports on the analysis of the data collected under the themes: what went well (effective ways of teaching critical reading), what did not go well, what needed to be improved if lessons were to be repeated in the future.

**Chapter 5:** discusses the findings and presents the overall conclusions reached vis-à-vis the effective ways of teaching critical reading, the appropriateness of critical reading materials used in the research project and the development of my self-awareness as a teacher.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for the study and reviews the relevant literature. The first section of this chapter answers the question: “why teach critical reading?” It provides insight into the reasons why the study is located in both socially critical and traditional theories of critical reading. The Namibian Curriculum is analysed in terms of its views about critical reading. Against this background, I explain and justify the approach adopted for teaching critical reading in this study. I then discuss the model of the reading process that underpins my approach to the teaching of critical reading. This is followed by a discussion of critical reading strategies used by readers to make sense of what they read. I then discuss the pedagogy that I used to facilitate students’ deeper and more critical understanding and the appropriate reading materials for this purpose. I conclude the chapter by providing a summary of the overall discussion.

#### 2.2 Why teach critical reading?

Firstly, the teaching of critical reading is required in the Namibian curriculum. The National Curriculum for Basic Education, envisages a learner who is taught to “explore”, “investigate”, “enquire”, “contextualize”, “hypothesise”, “weigh up alternatives”, “analyse”, “synthesise”, “evaluate”, “think critically and creatively”, and so on (Namibia. MoE, 2010:11). Clearly, these cognitive skills are an intrinsic part of critical thinking and reading.

Secondly, learner-centred education, a central tenet of Namibian education, is realized through the teaching of critical reading. In the past, school learning was designed to make sure students learned and memorized facts. This approach to learning is what Freire (1993:unpaged) describes as a banking approach: “the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits,” which are reproduced on demand. Today one of the key assumptions about knowledge in Namibia is that it involves deep understanding. Students explore issues, carefully and systematically examine them and thus develop a deeper understanding of them. Even though all reading activities have understanding as a goal, critical

reading encourages deeper understanding as a specific goal, (Graves, Juel & Graves, 2007; Lye, 2008).

Thirdly, *access, equity, quality* and *democracy*, values that guide Namibian education, are realized through the teaching of critical reading. Critical reading gives students access to relevant and quality education which emphasizes “learning to know”; “learning to do”; “learning to live together” and “learning to be”, (Crebbin, Villet, Keyter, Engelbrecht & Van der Mescht, 2008:30). It also encourages teaching that goes beyond “mere activity, instinctive or habitual response” (Namibia. MEC, 2002:8) to develop students’ cognitive, emotional and creative capacities to become independent critical thinkers. These are clearly elements of high-quality education that students access through critical reading.

With regard to, *democracy* and *equity*, critical reading encourages students of both genders to negotiate, convince, organize and distinguish between opinion and truth on an equal footing, thereby learning to participate fully in all spheres of society, (Al-Khateeb & Idrees, 2010; Namibia. MEC, 2008). As can be observed in chapter four, a critical reading teacher is not “a sage on the stage”, as his role is: “encouraging”, “guiding”, “mentoring” and “supporting the reading/learning process”. In fact, critical reading forms the very foundation of both intellectual freedom and the exercising in full of all citizenship in a democratic society. The principles of equity and democratic pedagogy can be implemented through critical reading lessons.

Fourthly, the teaching of critical reading is related to the needs of students. Today we live in a post-industrial, information age where we are bombarded, on a daily basis, with information that makes it difficult to distinguish between fact and opinion (Cervetti, Pardales & Damico, 2001 4). Media no longer influence our culture but are an intrinsic part of it (Thoman & Jolls, 2005). The teaching of critical reading, which includes learning to analyze and synthesize information from mass media texts, is important because to learn how to gain knowledge is more important than knowledge itself (Al-Khateeb & Idrees, 2010). The use of mass media as part of the repertoire in critical reading lessons is essential for students to cope with the rising demand in the level of knowledge and skills that our society requires our children to have (Resnick, Perkins, Newman cited in Graves, et al., 2007; Prinsloo & Janks, 2002).

Fifth, the main purpose of teaching students to read critically is to further develop their critical thinking skills so that they can reason independently and make fair judgments. Clearly, critical thinking and critical reading are two sides of the same coin. Understanding the relationship between the two is very crucial; I thus discuss this relationship in detail in section 6 of this chapter.

Finally, as demonstrated in chapter 4, the teaching of critical reading is crucial in Namibia because it embodies both the theory and practice of learner-centred education as it: (a) provides students with ability to understand, criticize and interact with texts; (b) expands their experiences; (c) develops and deepens their thinking abilities; (d) deepens an individual attitude to learning; (e) assists students to orientate and monitor themselves while reading; (f) promotes reading as both process and product; (g) encourages them to get involved in their educational process more actively and effectively; (h) prepares students for their future complex lives (Engelbrecht, 2008, as cited in Crebbin, et al., 2008; Oxford; Wallace as cited in Al-Khateeb & Idrees, 2010).

### **2.3 Theoretical framework of the study**

There are different ways of looking at critical reading. One can broadly distinguish between what I have chosen to call 'a traditional approach to teaching critical reading' and a socially critical approach to teaching literacy. The two approaches are discussed in more detail below.

#### **2.3.1 Critical social theory**

Critical social theory was set forth by Hegel and Marx who used it as an ethical base to challenge assumptions about society by revealing distortions underlying social practices and the structure embodied in them with the view to changing society, (Serafini, 2008; Cervetti, et al., 2008). Ivanic (1990:126) argues that "language can help to shape social practice," and that the purpose of critical literacy is to interrogate the language that produces such practices. Shor, (as cited in Simpson, 1996:118) defines a socially critical approach as an "analytical habit of thinking, reading and listening which goes beneath the surface impressions, traditional myths, mere opinions and routine clichés ..."

### **2.3.2 What is reading in the eyes of theorists who are socially critical?**

Firstly, the bedrock of the critical theorists is the belief that reading is a social practice. A reader interprets the text from his or her social, economic, political and cultural context. Goodman (1976 cited in Serafini, 2008); Luke (cited in Serafini, 2008) and Smith (cited in Abisamra, 2001) point out that critical theorists focus attention on what the readers bring to the process. Therefore, even though the interpretations have to be well thought out and justified, there might be many different interpretations of a text.

Secondly, to the critical theorists, reading is a process of thinking, in which knowledge is constructed through “sense making and rational analysis of reality” (Cervetti, et al., 2001:4). Teaching students to read critically suggests teaching them to construct knowledge as they read. It also suggests teaching students to “approach texts with a questioning stance that probes for underlying assumptions or intentions”, (Rusbult, 2001: unpagged).

Thirdly, an approach, which is socially critical, maintains that teaching students to become critical readers, involves teaching them to understand how texts construct ideas and realities (Lankshear, as cited in Cervetti, et al., 2008). The critical theorists contend that instructions should focus on helping readers understand how meanings are constructed. Janks (1993: iii) writes: “Critical language awareness emphasizes the fact that texts are constructed. Anything that has been constructed can be deconstructed”.

Fourthly, central to the critical perspective, is the notion that texts are not neutral, or context-free but rather a design of the author or “cultural artifacts” in which social events are interpreted (Luke, as cited in Serafini, 2003). O’Neill, (as cited in Serafini, 2003: unpagged) asserts:

From this perspective, texts are not neutral receptacles of information but cultural artifacts, created for specific purposes by people with social constructions that promote particular interests and versions of reality, and are sites for construction of plural and possibly conflicting meanings.

### **2.3.3 The traditional approach to critical reading**

What I have termed a traditional approach to critical reading is a practice that concerns itself with close reading, that is, recognizing an author’s purpose; distinguishing opinion from fact; making inferences; and reading to figure out the author’s thinking process; detecting

propaganda devices; examining the language and ideas in the text; but above all reasoning, (Carr, 2008; Kurland, n.d.; Cervetti, et al., 2001; Namibia. MoE, 2008; Santman, 2005; Wilson, 2003). This approach also focuses on evaluating the text to discover the concealed messages, attitudes and intentions of a writer, (Cervetti, et al., 2001; Serafini, 2003; Wikipedia, 2008). Some refer to it as active reading or active interrogation of the text, (Hillside, n.d.; Bull, Harris & Kimball, n.d.).

This approach, which is still commonly used in the teaching of English in Namibia, is grounded in liberal-humanism. "Conceptions of critical reading in a liberal-humanist rests on assumptions about knowledge, reality, authorship, discourse, and goals for education" (Cervetti, et al., 2001:4). This theory does not aim to change society intentionally. Rather it aims to develop an attitude of "reflective skepticism" towards reading (Reading, n.d.: unpagged) which suggests thinking seriously about what is read and not taking what is read to be true or correct without verification, (Reading, n.d.:unpagged).

Reading, according to the traditionalists, is a cognitive, psychological process divorced from any of the forces that are inherent in social, political, or cultural institutions", (Serafini, 2003:unpagged). De Castell and Luke (1986, cited in Serafini, 2003:unpagged) maintain that adherents of this approach conceive of reading as a "context-neutral, content-free, skill-specific competence that can be imparted to children with almost scientific precision". Traditionalists do not emphasise an understanding of the circumstances described and justifying those, (Prinsloo & Janks, 2002:10). Rather knowledge is believed to result from empirical observations; and language is seen to operate according to a system of rules that are completely knowable (Prinsloo & Janks, 2002; Luchini, n.d.; Rings, 1994; Serafini, 2003.; Vaezi, 2006).

These principles seem to inform the approach to critical reading advocated in the Namibian English syllabus and practiced in schools. Research suggests that, until recently South Africa, a country with a similar educational history to that of Namibia also used an approach that involved teaching students to identify figurative language and to be able to scrutinize text for tone, style and artistic structure. However, since the introduction of Outcomes Based Education in South Africa, the curriculum has moved in the direction of a more socially critical approach, although in Grades 10-12, a more traditional approach is still evident (Prinsloo & Janks, 2002; Murray, 2009).

Regarding reading text generally, the traditionalists accept the written text as a correct and appropriate, final authoritative product that contains a universal message, (Cervetti, et al., 2001; Ivanic, 1990, Janks, 2003; Serafini, 2003). For this reason, readers are not expected to interpret the text according to their own social and political context. To the traditionalists, only an expert who is trained to interpret the text in its original context can easily access the universal message contained in the text. There is therefore a correct (expert) and incorrect interpretation of the text (Cervetti, et al., 2001). Translated into the educational context, this suggests that the teacher should process the information on behalf of his or her students, effectively making them passive readers. Nunan (as cited in Vaezi, 2005:1) refers to this approach as a “bottom up” approach and McCarthy calls it “outside-in”. However, this approach to critical reading is *not*:

- Being negative and cynical about everything
- Political correctness
- Censoring the bad books and only reading the good books
- Indoctrination

Further, the differences between the traditional approach to teaching critical reading in schools and a socially critical approach advocated by theorist such as Janks (2003), Ivanic (1990) and Luke (2008) are summarized in the table below:

**Table 1**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Traditional approach to critical reading</b>	<b>A socially critical approach to literacy</b>
Knowledge	Knowledge is gained through sensory experience in the world or through rational thought; a separation between facts, inferences, and reader judgments is assumed.	What counts as knowledge cannot be natural or neutral; knowledge is always based on the discursive rules of a particular community, and is thus ideological.

Reality	Reality is directly knowable and can therefore serve as a referent for interpretation.	Reality cannot be known definitively, and cannot be captured by language; decisions about truth, therefore, cannot be based on a theory of correspondence with reality, but must instead be made locally
Authorship	Detecting the author's intentions is the basis for higher levels of textual interpretation.	Textual meaning is always multiple, contested; culturally and historically situated, and constructed with differential relations of power
Instructional goals	Development of higher level skills of comprehension and interpretation	Development of critical consciousness

Adopted from Cervetti, et.al., 2001:unpaged.

## **2.4 Critical reading and the Namibian Curriculum**

### **2.4.1 The Broad Curriculum: Basic Teacher Education Diploma**

The Namibian broad Curriculum demands that student teachers reflect and construct meaning from texts in their social, economic and political contexts (Namibia. MoE, 2008:35). Translated into the context of reading this suggests thinking critically and constructing meaning from the text in the act of reading. "Social", "economic" and "political" context suggests that the reader should seek to understand the text in his/her own environment. The Broad Curriculum further asserts that it strives "to develop the ability of student teachers to actively participate in collaborative decision making". Applied to reading, this suggests that reading should assist students to learn to work together. In addition to achieving the above, the curriculum further demands that students should be assisted to "develop their cognitive, social, and practical skills" (Namibia. MoE, 2008). Clearly, these are social views of learning and teaching. The broad curriculum tends to value a social constructivist rather than the traditional or liberal humanist theoretical approaches.

### **2.4.2 The syllabuses for English Communication Skills and English Second Language**

The Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) English Communication Skills syllabus demands that students “interpret suitable study and reading texts” (Namibia. MoE, 2006:3). In addition, it requires students to “analyse, interpret and use suitable texts and structures to enhance understanding”, to “outline and make inferences from written texts; identify, synthesise and evaluate important contextual information from different data sources; use persuasive language” and “infer phenomena [meaning] from data”, (Namibia.MoE, 2006:4-10). Similarly, the school syllabus for English as a second language views critical reading as “a thinking, reasoning subject”. It also lists cognitive skills that learners need to acquire: analysing, synthesising, evaluating, drawing of inferences, presentation of opinion, and detection of bias (Namibia. MoE, 2008). This definition reflects a traditional approach to critical reading. It is thus clear that unlike the broad curriculum, the syllabus institutionalizes a traditional approach to teaching critical reading in English as a second language

### **2.4.3 Why I taught in framework of both the socially critical and the traditional approach to critical reading**

In light of the demands of the Namibian curricula (English Communication Skills syllabus and the Broad curriculum), I decided to bring together the two approaches to critical reading described above to form a synthesized theoretical position. The socially critical approach, as stated earlier, wants the readers to: interpret text in their social context and construct knowledge in that process. The theory I have termed the traditional, wants readers to apply serious thinking to reading; read with a view to analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, drawing inferences, ordering facts, presenting opinion, and detecting bias (Namibia. MoE, 2007:2). The Namibian Curriculum demands aspects of both approaches, (Namibia. Ministry of Education and Culture [MEC], 2002:21). Therefore, I adopted a synthesized theoretical position to develop students’ cognitive, social and personal skills, which include exploring, evaluating, co-operating, tolerating, making informed choices, decisions and judgments. These skills in turn develop an attitude of reading for deep understanding of the text, culminating in meeting the demands of the Namibian curricula. This synthesized theoretical position provided an excellent conduit for meeting the requirements of the Namibian curricula. Aspects of socially critical theory employed in the lesson unit can be observed in chapter 3.

Even though I synthesized socially critical and traditional approaches, I did not adopt and employ the two “lock, stock, and barrel” (Clegg, 2007:13) or exactly as they are. The Namibian curricula do not demand all the aspects of the theories. Therefore, I was selective and left out some ideas. I did consider some of the traditional views, discussed in more detail in the section on reading strategies, as can be observed from the descriptions in chapter three. These ideas included recognizing an author’s purpose; examining the hidden agenda of the texts; distinguishing opinion from fact; making inferences; reading to figure out the author’s thinking process; examining the language and ideas in the text. Similarly, the socially critical ideas I did consider were the approach that textual meaning making is a process of knowledge construction not exegesis, the texts were understood in the context of the students’ social and historic background and not solely as the product or intention of an author. Furthermore, I adopted the approach that reading is a social, reflective practice and an act of coming to know the world, the idea that reading is a practice of interrogating social issues through a dialogue between text and the reader and the factors that may have influenced the writer to create the text in a specific manner. I also adopted the idea that students are not merely vessels to be filled with knowledge, that language is never neutral but socially constructed and that teaching is both offering students the opportunity to learn and facilitating this learning.

## **2.5 Reading process: Model for [critical] reading**

Having discussed critical reading and the Namibian curriculum, I now focus attention on the model of the reading process that underpinned the approach to teaching and reading critically.

### **2.5.1 The interactive model of reading**

Critical readers (taught in a socially critical framework and in a traditional critical framework), employ bottom up and top down processes in their reading. Berardo (2006:61) states, “Bottom-up processing is when the reader builds up meaning by reading word for word, letter for letter. Top-down processing is when the reader obtains a global meaning of a text through clues”. The interactive model is a result of the realization that neither top-down information processing nor bottom-up information processing is adequate on its own (Carrell, cited in Abisamra, 2008; Rumelhart cited in Graves, et al., 2007). In the case of critical reading, both approaches are utilized simultaneously. Berardo (2006:61) points out:

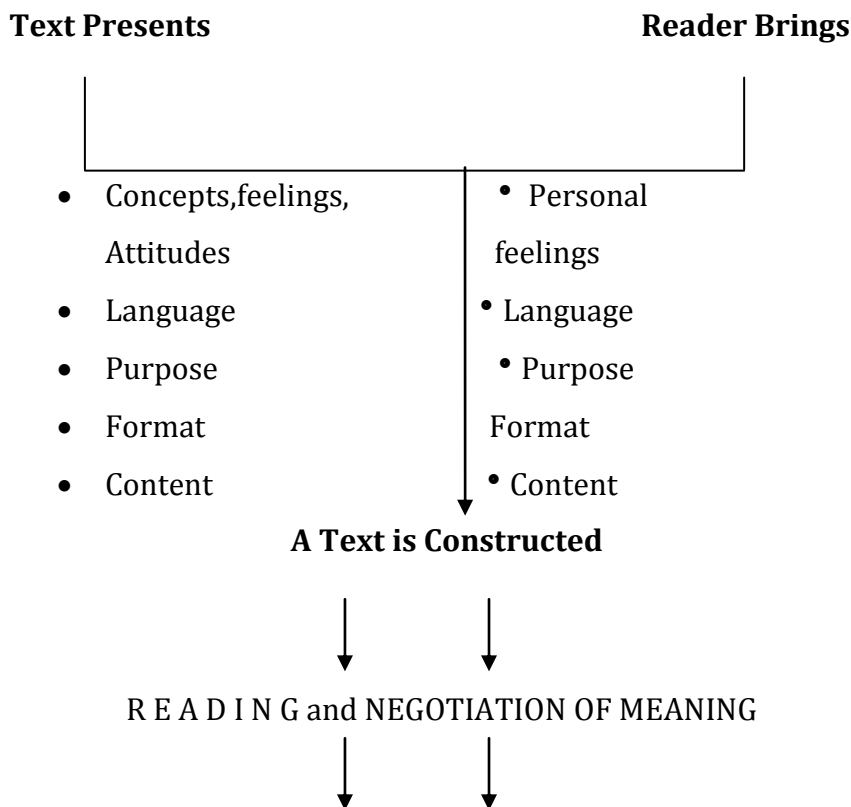
In interactive models, readers are usually assumed to be drawing upon both bottom-up and top-down information processing before eventually settling upon an interpretation of a text. In other words, interactive models involve both an array of lower-level rapid, automatic identification skills and an array of higher-level comprehension skills.

Rumelhart (1985, as cited in Verdugo, n.d.) asserts that readers use “sensory, syntactic (the way words and phrases are put together to form sentences in a language), semantic (the meaning of words, phrases or system), and pragmatic information”. These sources of information interact in many complex ways during the process of reading to construct meaning, (Harrison, 1998; Rumelhart, 1985, cited in Verdugo, n.d.). Rumelhart has thus combined the best aspects from bottom-up and top-down models to form his interactive model.

Furthermore, Goodman (1981, as cited in Verdugo, n.d.) points out that readers use cues from text and combine them with their schemata, discussed in detail below, to construct meaning. In such a relationship, meaning is negotiated between the reader and the text.

### Graph 1

This model can be represented in a graphic form as below.



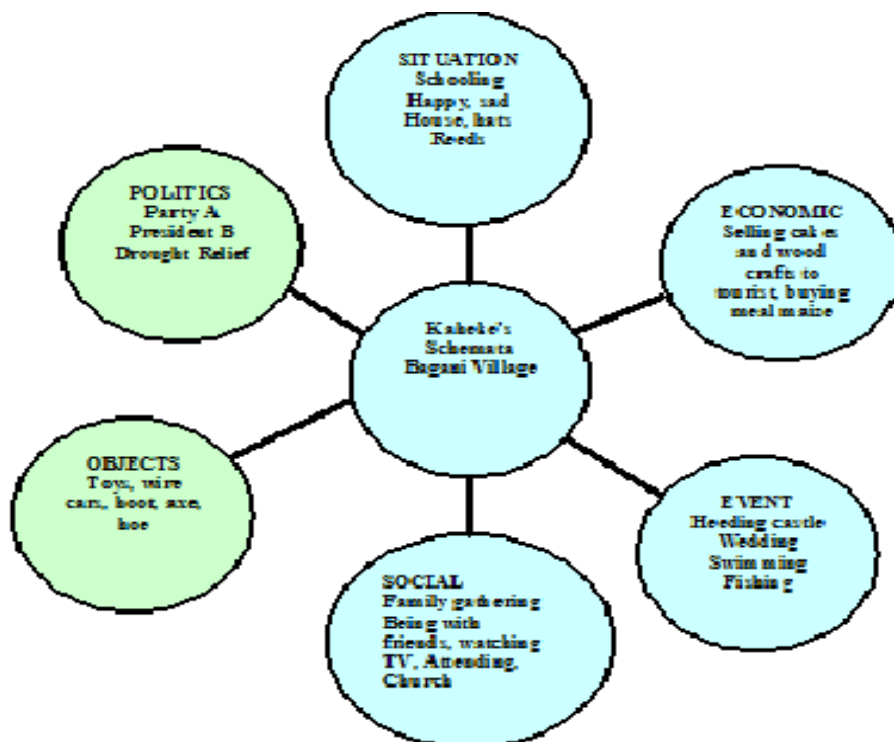
## NEW MEANING

Adapted from Reading (n.d.)

As stated above, schema influences understanding of the text. A schema represents an individual's knowledge about "events", "objects", "situations", "sequences of events", "actions and sequence of actions", built over a period of time through observations and experiences from the environment (Rumelhart, as cited in Graves, et. al., 2007:4). It is from these schemata that humans interpret new experiences. Therefore, Block, Rodgers and Johnson, (2004); Cunningham and Allington (1994, cited in Duarte, n.d.) Graves (et. al., 2007) and Keene (2007, cited in Connecting practice and research, 2008) maintain that, in fact, the reader's schemata predispose a reader to understand a text. They thus encourage teachers to help readers to connect new information from texts to their familiar experiences by activating the schemata to assimilate information in them.

### Graph 2

Graphically, the schemata can be represented as follows:



The section below, discusses the reading strategies, which were informed by the interactive reading model, which I employed to develop the students' abilities to make sense of a text and to monitor their ongoing understanding. I also sought to develop those reading strategies in the critical reading lesson unit described in chapter three.

## **2.6 Reading strategies**

First, it is worth noting that both the social and traditional critical theories position readers as active rather than passive meaning-makers and both stress the importance of textual critique, (Cervetti, et al., 2001). In addition, they all emphasize higher-level analytic and evaluative skills. It is therefore clear that both perspectives employ metacognition; analyzing; synthesizing; making inferences and evaluating reading strategies.

However, the socially critical perspective adds a social dimension to these strategies to examine assumptions and the way in which texts position the reader. Readers who are socially critical undertake those cognitive exercises to challenge social inequities; to foreground issues of power and differences across race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Socially critical readers would, for example, deconstruct the texts they read to engage in some social action stemming from their new understanding and this would culminate in social justice, freedom, and equity.

### **2.6.1 Metacognition**

Metacognition can be used to enhance learning in general, but, in the case of this study, it is discussed specifically in terms of reading strategies. Carrell (2007) and Graves et.al., (2007), define metacognition as the reader's own awareness of how his/her brain is processing information as he/she is reading, (Benchmark Education Company, 1997-2010) and the awareness of the extent to which he/she understands the content. Schunk and Zimmerman (as cited in Graves, et. al., 2007:12) describe meta-cognitive reading as an act whereby readers mentally "step outside of themselves" and that the ability to mentally step outside oneself enables a reader to become a self-regulated learner who independently generates thoughts, feelings, strategies, and behaviours that help him or her to attain deeper understanding. The principle underpinning this strategy is that once readers become aware of how the brain processes information, they can (a) monitor and control their own reading process and comprehension; (b) detect if they are making sense of the text and the degree to which they are

understanding the text and thus apply self-correction measures; (c) become independent, flexible and adaptive readers; (d) take their thinking to a higher level (Keene, 2007, cited in *Connecting practice and research*, 2008; Rings, 1994). Reading (n.d.) adds that readers who are aware of how their brain processes information know (a) the kind of reading and thinking required of them to understand the text; (b) their own strengths and shortcomings in reading particular texts; (c) and that they must regulate their thinking when they are reading.

Klein, et al. (as cited in Vaezi, 2007:2) argue that teachers can cause students to become aware of how their brain processes information by asking them to pause, mentally step back and ask: how am I reading? Do I understand what the author is saying? “What do I do if I don’t understand what I am reading?” and so on. They also argue that students should:

- Identify the purpose for reading, form or type of the reading,
- Be made aware of difficulties of the text before reading,
- Make predictions about the author’s purpose for writing the text,
- Make continuous predictions about what will occur next, based on information obtained earlier.

### **2.6.2 Making inferences**

Making inferences about a text is bringing “more thinking to language in order to figure out what it really means” (Santman, 2005:65-69). Graves, et al. (2007:276) see inferring as “a reading activity in which the reader musters information from the text and his/her background knowledge to fill in the missing bits of information that are not explicitly stated in the text”. Similarly, Fountas and Pinnell (2006:42) define inferencing as the act of “going beyond the literal meaning of a text to think about what is not there but is implied by the writer”. Fountas and Pinnell (2006) and Facione (2006) write that when making inferences one engages in some or all of the following processes:

- Predicting what is coming next;
- Bringing content knowledge to the understanding of a text;
- Making connections to one’s personal experiences;
- Integrating existing content knowledge with new knowledge;

- Relating and comparing the text to others one has heard or read;
- Synthesizing the information to realize the greater meaning of text;
- Identifying and securing elements needed to draw reasonable conclusions;
- Forming conjectures and hypotheses;
- Considering relevant information and deducing the consequences flowing from data, statements, principles, evidence, judgments, beliefs, opinions concepts, descriptions, questions, (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006:33, Facione, 2006: 6).

To Santman (2005:65), inferring means replacing “the literal words on the page with words that make the text make more sense” to the reader and bringing “understandings to the text that are not literally there”. Fountas and Pinnell (2006:33) contend that replacing the literal words leads to full understanding of the text “because the real meaning may be different qualitatively from the literal meaning”. Making inferences helps readers to:

- Understand the motivations of characters in fiction and biography;
- Derive universal human truths from the reading;
- Learn about life vicariously by seeing through the eyes of another;
- Enjoy the connections between one’s own life and the texts one reads;
- Learn from text through identifying new information and incorporating it into one’s existing understanding.

### **2.6.3 Analysing**

The act of analysing means to do a “detailed study or examination of something in order to understand more about it”. That is, “intricate patterns are broken down into less complicated elements” and “a problem is simplified by limiting the amount that must be examined at any time” (Hornby, 2002:46). It also suggests examining the author’s choices with regard to content, the language and the structure. Fountas and Pinnell (2006); Kurland, (n.d.) and Thoman & Jolls, (2005) view text analysis as a close, careful and systematic examination of the choices, elements or features of a text such as form, writing style, organization of the text/sequence and specific techniques the author uses which might reveal his or her intentions. Thoman and Jolls (2005); Fountas and Pinnell (2006) and Facione (2006) maintain that readers analyze a text, when they:

- use prior knowledge and experiences to predict outcomes;

- interpret a message using concepts such as purpose, audience, point of view, form of genre, character, plot, theme, mood, setting and context;
- use strategies including comparing/contrasting; distinguishing fact from opinion and cause from effect; listing and sequencing;
- examine a fictional or informational text closely to better understand its elements and how it is constructed;
- discover how writers craft meaning for readers;
- understand how a text works;
- understand how texts are organized to provide important information;
- understand how language is used in a text to convey meaning and emotions;
- support thinking with textual evidence or evidence from personal experiences;
- notice how word choice conveys particular meanings;
- examine illustrations or other graphic features and how they evoke aesthetic responses and convey meaning;
- recognize and use graphic features of texts to increase understanding;
- recognize and use literary features to expand understanding; and
- examine the whole text to determine how illustrations, text, and format communicate meaning in an integrated way.

#### **2.6.4 Synthesizing**

Synthesizing is “putting together information from the text and from the reader’s own background knowledge in order to create new understanding”, (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006: 42). When synthesizing, readers (a) acquire new information to add to what is previously known, reorganizing existing information in the process; (b) encounter new ideas, weigh them against their current attitudes, and decide whether to change; (c) grow in their understanding of people, settings, and events beyond their personal experience.

#### **2.6.5 Evaluating**

Thoman & Jolls (2005:30) write, “When people evaluate messages, they relate messages to their own experience and make judgments about the veracity, quality and relevance of messages”. Similarly, Facione (2006:5) points out that to evaluate is to:

assess the credibility of statements or other representations which are accounts of descriptions of a person's perception, experience, situation, judgment, belief, or opinion; and to assess the logical strength of the actual or intended inferential relationships among statements, descriptions, questions or other forms of representation.

Thoman & Jolls (2005:30) point out that evaluating includes being able to (a) appreciate and take pleasure in interpreting messages in different genres and forms; (b) judge the value of messages based on one's ethical, religious or democratic principle; for example, judging an author's or speaker's credibility, comparing the strengths and weaknesses of alternative interpretations, determining the credibility of a source of information, judgment; (c) respond orally, in print or electronically to messages of varying complexity and content.

In the socially critical reading class, students evaluate whose knowledge is being privileged in texts and de-construct the message of those meanings. They evaluate the social construction of text and question the factors that may have influenced the author to create the text in a specific manner, (Critical literacy, n.d.:unpaged).

## **2.7 The pedagogy applied in the critical reading lesson unit**

In this section, I discuss ways of teaching critical reading. *Ways* here refers to the plans, methods, manners, thoughts and ideas, specific procedures that can be employed to facilitate students' comprehension of the text (Al-Khateeb & Idrees, 2010).

### **2.7.1 Stages in teaching critical reading**

One way of teaching reading, including critical reading, is by following three stages, namely *pre-*, *during-* and *post-*reading. The purposes of pre-reading are to (a) activate or provide important background knowledge; (b) prompt students to think around the subject raised in the text, as discussed in the interactive reading model; (c) set purposes for reading; (d) build text specific knowledge; (e) relate reading to students' lives, (Burke, 2001; Morelli, 2008; Graves, et al., 2007; Reading, n.d.). Following the pre-reading stage is the during-reading stage. The main purpose of during-reading is to enhance the students' actual reading process and for the reading teacher to model the strategies effective readers use to guide students, to make sense of text in the process

of reading, (Graves, et al., 2007). The last stage in the teaching reading process is post-reading. This is a stage where students are encouraged to step back and “think critically and logically about the information and ideas from the text”, (Graves, et al., 2007:250). At this stage, the critical reading teacher encourages responses to probing questions; discusses and develops interpretations; analyses, clarifies; extends and evaluates the text.

### **2.7.2 Prediction**

Predictions set thinking in motion and this strategy thus provides purposes for reading, (Duarte, n.d.; Graves, et al., 2007). The thinking processes involved in predicting assist students in maintaining interest and in constructing meaning from reading. Predicting entails:

- giving students the opportunity to preview what they will be reading
- looking at the text headings, subheadings, illustrations, features such as maps, etc
- previewing the text to anticipate what will happen next
- discussing text features
- talking about what students think they will learn (Block, et al., 2004; Oczkus, 2003:unpaged). Block, et al., (2004:unpaged) sum up:

By making predictions, readers are using the following processes: prior knowledge, thinking on a literal and inferential level, adding to their knowledge base, linking affective thinking processes, making connections, and filling the gaps in the author's writing.

### **2.7.3 Identifying main ideas**

Identifying the main ideas from the text compels a reader to apply thinking as they read the text because the reader must think globally to unify the specific details in a paragraph or the whole text. Morelli (2001:unpaged) claims that identifying main ideas of a text is a pre-requisite for engaging students in higher order critical thinking skills or critical reading. Morelli (2001:unpaged) sums up that these main ideas (a) lay the foundation for analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the text; (b) provide a context out of which to stimulate reasoning and conclusions; (c) improve reader confidence; (d) solidify comprehension.

However, Keene (2007, cited in *Connecting practice and research*, 2008: unpagged) points out that readers do frequently differ about which idea is the most important one in a paragraph or in a text because decisions about main ideas are made based on:

- The reader's purpose
- The reader's schema for the context – ideas most closely connected to the reader's prior knowledge will be considered most important
- What he or she values, considers worthy
- Language that surprises or otherwise captures the reader's sustained focus
- The reader's beliefs, opinions, and experiences related to the text
- Concepts another reader mentions prior to, during or after reading
- The reader's schema for the text format – text that stands out visually and/or ideas that are repeated are often considered most important
- The reader's understanding of text structures – for example, cause/effect text structure; the reader should direct his or her attention to those elements.

The students must therefore “articulate how they make decisions about what is important in a given context and how those decisions enhance their overall comprehension of a piece” and defend their positions (Keene, 2007, cited in *Connecting practice and research*, 2008:unpagged).

#### **2.7.4 Summarizing**

Summarizing is shortening the original version of a text read. Summarizing is a process of deleting redundant information; categorizing information; identifying and using the author's main ideas. Kissner, (2006:5) sees summarizing as similar to identifying main ideas in that it requires higher level thinking as readers “process text in one form, make judgments about the ideas, and analyze, and synthesize ideas and restate the text in a new form”. Summarizing teaches students to rethink what they have read. Flood and Lapp (1991, as cited in *Reading*, n.d.:unpagged) sum up:

strategic readers summarize what they have been reading and contemplate their first impressions. They reflect and take second looks to develop more thoughtful and critical interpretations of the text. Finally, they make applications of the ideas encountered in the text by extending these ideas to broader perspectives.

### **2.7.5 Asking questions**

Many researchers suggest a questioning mode as a particularly effective strategy to teach students to read critically, (Kurland, n.d.; Cervetti, et al, 2001; Wilson, 2003). Cervetti, et al. (2001) and Wheeler (n.d.) argue that questions are natural thought provokers and are tools used to investigate the writer's intentions. Examples of critical reading questions are (Flamond as cited in Cervetti, et al., 2001:3): (a) to whom is the ad [vertisement] addressed? (b) to what need or desire does it appeal? health, popularity, comfort, security, etc. (c) what claims are not substantiated? (d) what attention-getting devices are used? Such questions can also help a reader to monitor and correct his/her comprehension in the act of reading (Keene, 2007 cited in Connecting practice and research, 2008; Kurland, n.d.). Furthermore, Keene (2007 cited in Connecting practice and research, 2008:unpaged), provides some reasons for why readers ask questions. They are to: (a) clarify meaning; (b) speculate about the text yet to be read; (c) show skepticism or a critical stance and (d) determine the author's intent, style, content or format and; (e) focus their attention on ideas, events etc. Wilson (2003:1) cautions teachers "the art of asking questions which are easily with students' grasp, but which lead them to engage more interactively with the text is very tricky". Many such questions are the "most intriguing questions whose answers are not explicitly in the text but left to the readers' interpretations", (Keene, 2007, cited in Connecting practice and research, 2008:unpaged).

### **2.7.6 Discussion**

A strong conventional approach to teaching critical reading is the use of discussion. Discussions involve students more deeply in the learning experience, as they are not spectators but rather active participants in the learning experience. The purpose of any discussion strategy is to "freely explore ideas, to learn something new, or to gain a different perspective by pooling the information or insight that more than one person can give" (Graves, et. al., 2007:250). In addition, Maiers, (2007: unpaged) argues that if "students share their reactions, thoughts, and feelings about the text they are able to take the discussion and reflection to a much deeper level". Burns (2005:29) points out that discussion, "provides insights into students' thinking and it ensures that no student is invisible in the class, but all are participating and working to understand and learn". Reading (n.d.:unpaged) states:

Discussion is an integral part of assessing students' reading. Speech is the exposed edge of the thinking process. By listening to students talk about text, teachers can understand

where students are in their level of response. Teachers can judge on what level of abstraction students are operating.

### 2.7.7 The K-W-L

The K-W-L: “know” “want” and “learn” is a procedure for teaching expository text, (Graves, et al., 2007:261). Al-Khateeb and Idrees (2010:476) define the K-W-L as “a set of well-organized steps to be followed by students to attain reading comprehension”. Pritchard and Cartwright (in Graves, et al., 2007) contend that the K-W-L procedure is extremely useful for dealing with informational material, both in hard copy and on the Internet. The procedure can be used to scaffold students’ own interests and inquiries, to draw on learners’ prior knowledge, to relate and to compare what they know to the knowledge in the text. The procedure involves “brainstorming, establishing purposes through questioning and finding answers to those questions” which culminate in students reading actively, (Graves, et al., 2007:263). The process further entails (a) making connections with people, places, situations, and ideas; (b) deciding what the author is saying about situations and ideas; (c) paying attention to those words, ideas, and actions that are unclear, keeping in mind that they may become clear later; (d) figuring out what will happen and verifying it; (e) determining the author’s intent by reading between the lines; (f) responding to what they have read and passing judgment (Reading, n.d., unpagued).

**Table 2**

What we <b>K</b> now	What we <b>W</b> ant to know	What we <b>L</b> earned

### 2.8 Text organization or structure

Understanding how meanings are constructed is crucial in critical reading because texts are not natural things (Janks, 1993; Thoman & Jolls, 2005). “They are built surely as buildings and highways are built” and thus have structures (Thoman & Jolls, 2005:11). As in the case of metacognition, text structure can be used to enhance learning in general, but, in the case of this study, it is discussed specifically in terms of reading strategies (Carrell, 1992; Grabe, n.d.).

While Hess (2006) attributes the overall comprehension of text to other factors such as explicitness of ideas and so on, Dymock's (2002-2008) and Dickson, Simmons and Kame'enui's (cited in Hess, 2006) research reveals that systematic attention to the semantic and the internal syntactic organizational arrangements used in a text, facilitates and enhances comprehension of the text. As Mohan (cited in Grabe, n.d) points out, awareness of the way the text is composed, arranged and patterned enhances students' understanding of the coherence and logic of the information. Powell, (n.d.) encourages teachers to teach students to (a) identify the elements of a paragraph; (b) recognize the transitional words that signal important information or a shift in focus; (c) organize the information in an expository text into an outline; (d) summarize sections of the text as they read; (e) use available information such as subheadings to orient and focus their reading; (f) identify the main ideas throughout the text; (g) take effective notes for subsequent discussions or writing assignments.

### **2.8.1 Types of text structure**

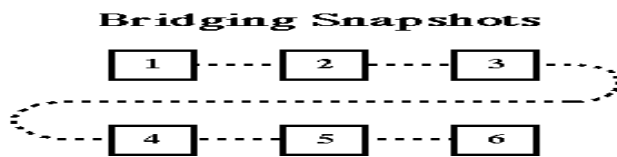
Hess (2006:2) categorizes text structure into two types: Low-level structure (less complicated) and Top-level structure (more complicated ones). The text structures do not however occur in a linear sequence as arranged here.

#### **2.8.1.1 Low-level structure**

**2.8.1.2 Sequence (process) structure:** steps or phases of a process specified with a cause effect relationship being implied. This includes a series of events leading up to a conclusion. Cue Words: first; next; second; until; third; while; last; soon ...

**2.8.1.3 Events/Enumeration/Description structure:** This includes listing connected information, outlining a series of steps (Lewis & Clark, 2003 as in *The Reading Teacher*, 2004). This pattern covers a large piece of writing rather than single paragraph. Cue Words: the following; then; in addition; another; well; furthermore; few; likewise; besides; several some.

### Graph 3



Adapted from Lewis and Clark (2003)

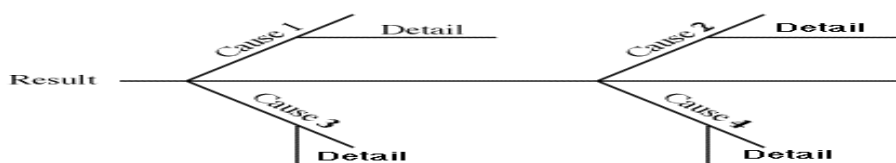
**2.8.1.4 Definition structure:** This includes definition and examples of class membership/type, attributes, and functions.

**2.8.1.5 Compare/contrast:** Shows similarities and dissimilarities between objects, actions, ideas or processes. Cue Words: however; even though; but; on the contrary; yet; otherwise; despite; in comparison; still; on the other hand.

### 2.8.2 Top-level structure

**2.8.2.1 Cause and effect (antecedent) structure:** Cause and effect refers to one event causing another and is commonly found in all types of writing. It can be organized by listing one cause and several effects. Cue Words: for this reason; thus; in order to; as a result; because; consequently; so that; on account of.

### Graph 4



Adapted from Grabe (n.d.) and Lewis and Clark (2003)

**2.8.2.2 Problem-solution (hypothetical) structure:** may follow a number of different forms. At one extreme, the problem/solutions are labeled as such. At the other extreme, the pattern is a series of questions and answers that may not lead to a solution of the problem or issue. Signal Words: problem; solution; because; cause; since; as a result; so that

**2.8.2.3 Proposition-Support (persuasion):** argument and counter argument are both presented in support of a thesis statement.

**2.8.2.4 Judgment/critique structure:** uses a set of criteria to evaluate information or ideas that have been presented.

**2.8.2.5 Inductive/Deductive structure:** a deductive structure first presents a generalization/definition and then follows it with specific examples; conversely, an inductive structure presents illustrations and examples and then moves the reader to draw a conclusion from examples. These structures are often embedded within cause/effect, proposition/support and judgment/critique structures.

## **2.9 The relationship between critical reading and critical thinking**

First, there is a thin line between critical reading and critical thinking because critical reading is critical thinking in reading. Kurland (n.d.: unpagged) contends that a student can only read critically if he or she has the ability to think critically. Critical reading and critical thinking thus complement one another. “Critical reading is a technique for discovering information and ideas within a text” and “critical thinking is a technique for evaluating information and idea” (Kurland, n.d.:1). Further, critical thinking and reading skills are both used to (a) critique rhetoric – evaluate the validity or credibility of arguments and/or develop a general skepticism towards statements and knowledge; (b) critique tradition - being skeptical of conventional wisdom, common sense, long standing practices and traditional ways of doing things; (c) critique authority – being skeptical of one dominant view and being open to a plurality of views; (d) critique knowledge – recognizing that knowledge is never value free and it has a subjective and contextualized nature and;(e) to shape the students’ ability to reason and to be meticulous in weighing evidence (Kurland, n.d.:unpagged).

## **2.10 Critical reading materials**

Firstly, teaching reading materials should be true to the rationale or theory that they purport to follow. For critical reading Spiegel, (1990:410) suggests that the materials should first promote reflective thinking. That is, the text should present situations that do not have one obvious, immediately evident interpretation. Secondly, the materials must require students to pause, reflect, consider, and try out more than one hypothesis or attend to several factors before

settling upon an answer - a well-reasoned approach to the task not a quick answer. In other words, students should make careful, logical and supportable inferences. Thirdly, they should cause students to focus on problems from multiple perspectives using divergent rather than convergent thinking, recognizing the possibility that there may be more than one correct answer or approach. Fourthly, the materials should encourage readers to use class discussions to respond to the text and to create an awareness of thinking processes as participants hear each other's solutions and learn to defend their own stance.

The notion of linking learning to the learners' social life is central to critical reading principles. This notion calls for the use of authentic materials. Wallace (1992, as cited in Berardo, 2006:61) defines authentic text as "real-life text, not written for pedagogic purposes". Examples of authentic materials are newspaper articles; magazine articles; texts from the internet; radio news broadcasts, TV programmes. Such texts present language learners with situations they are likely to encounter outside their classroom in the "real world" and "reflect how language is really used", (Berardo, 2006: 64). Such materials or worldwide reading expands students' horizons. They also give the readers opportunity to gain real information from the real world, and know what is going on in the world.

With regard to visual materials, Spiegel, (1990:410) points out that, the materials must be "of an acceptable level of quality, usefulness, and appropriateness for the context and people with whom they are being used". Visual materials can be employed by teachers and learners to enhance language learning in classrooms. They may range from simple hand-made charts, workbooks, reproducible worksheets, or a set of activities, pictures, electronic and digital materials.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the theoretical framework of the action research study undertaken to teach student teachers critical reading. The theories of socially critical theory and traditional theory, which underpin both the teaching of the lessons and the study as a whole, was discussed alongside the Namibian curriculum. I argued that in the Namibian curriculum context, a combined theoretical position, traditional and socially critical theory, is the most suitable approach to teaching critical reading. Similarly, the interactive model in which readers combine

knowledge from text with their own to construct meaning is best suited for teaching critical reading. The chapter further explains what critical reading entails and how critical reading should be taught. The strategies and the pedagogy encourage readers to draw from the reading text and from their practical experience to review their own reservoir of relevant knowledge and ideas. Such an approach enables readers to employ their own active ways of making sense of what they are reading and develop better understanding of the issues raised in the text. The chapter culminates with an argument that critical reading is critical thinking in reading. Finally, in order for the reading teacher to help students enhance their critical thinking and reading skills, he/she must select reading materials that compel reflective thinking.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology employed. It justifies the use of an action research case study as a suitable research method. The chapter further explains:

- the research methods employed and why they were selected;
- the reasons for the decisions made in selecting the sample;
- critical reading lesson design; and
- data collection techniques employed.

It concludes with a consideration of ethics, validity and the limitations of the research.

#### The research goals

The goals which the research sought to address and thus guided the action research project are finding effective ways to teach critical reading, exploring critical reading materials and heightening self-awareness.

#### 3.2 Case study methods

The nature of the research problem predisposes the choice of a suitable research method (Noor, Rizan & Fatema, n.d.). First, it is worth noting that *even though I used quantitative data analysis to a limited extent to determine the students' initial abilities to read text critically and to account for a specific number of students who made progress and otherwise*, this action research case study used a qualitative methodology. Arias (1995:69) points out that depending on the researcher's question, qualitative methodology may be used in action research. Qualitative research methodology seeks a "local perspective" not "generalization" and "local understanding" not "universal" truth, (Arias, 1995). A case study is a generic term encompassing many methods such as inductive and deductive, or positivistic; post-modernist; realist and interpretive perspectives (Arias, 1995; Bell, 1998; Murphy, 2009). It is a method, which enables a researcher to investigate intensively a single specific instance with a view to gaining an in-depth understanding of that

situation, (Bell, 1998; Murphy, 2009; Yin, 1994). Another feature of a case study is that it focuses on the world of action (Blichfeldt & Andersen, 2006).

First, this study adopted and followed guidelines for doing a qualitative action research case study. The aim of the study was to investigate critical reading and its pedagogy (a single situation) with a view to attaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and improving my practice as a teacher. My aim was to gain a good deal of knowledge about the nature of critical reading. I also wanted to discover how best to teach it in order to benefit my students. In order to teach effectively, one must have repeated experiences of teaching well, in addition to giving the process a great deal of thought. Clearly, the case study method, which focuses on the world of action, is therefore an appropriate method to study this single instance, the craft of teaching, (Blichfeldt & Andersen, 2006; Mills, 2007). An action research case study enables researchers not only to suggest appropriate lines of action but also to investigate the actual effects of such actions” (Blichfeldt & Andersen, 2006:2).

Secondly, the goals, which this research sought to address, mainly involve non-numerical, descriptive research involving the application of reasoning with regard to a qualitative incident. Quantitative design procedures alone could not account for all the variables found in this instance, an English critical reading classroom (Alwright & Baily 1991, cited in Arias, 1995:69). The research was interested in getting deep insight into the world of lived experience and in deducing meaning from views of the students who experienced the critical reading lessons (Schwandt, 1994, cited in Andrade, 2009). The study is thus located within the interpretive paradigm. It did not seek to generalize and to tell a universal truth but was aimed at improving my practice and the lives of the students.

### **3.2.1 The suitability of action research**

Firstly, this action research study has its origin in the increasing sense of discontent I had in the teaching of critical reading. Schmuck (2006:21) wrote:

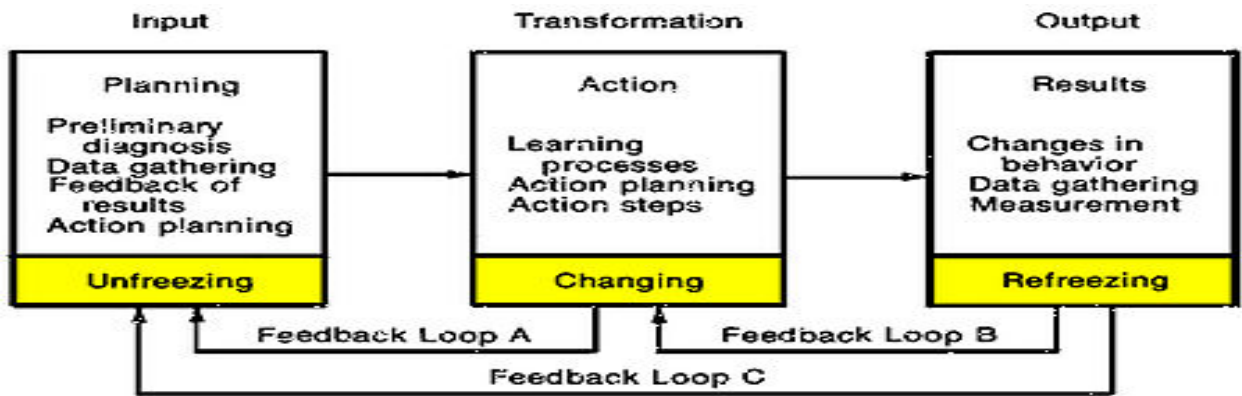
...action researchers look at what they themselves are or should be doing, reflect on what they are thinking and feeling, and seek creative ways to improve how they are behaving. In other words you conduct action research to improve your practices and the lives of your students.

On my appointment as a teacher educator, I taught reading as I had experienced it as a learner and as my teachers taught me. That is, “students taking turns to read a few lines aloud, sometimes in broken and halting fashion” (Harlech-Jones, 2007:7).

Thirdly, individual action research, which I undertook, allowed me to research myself. One of the primary focuses of this study is self-awareness. This suggests, “Shifting my thinking from its spontaneous, intuitive mode into its critical, reflective mode” (Hartman, 2000:140). Thus, I investigated my attitudes and behaviours to identify and understand which of them impinged on, did, or did not support effective ways of teaching critical reading. This action research study therefore transcends the mere understanding of teaching events and unearths my unexamined beliefs and behaviours (Arias, 1995:72). It culminated in me beginning to gain a greater understanding of myself and my own practice and how my attitudes and behaviours shaped my critical reading lessons. The mere application of theoretical principles generated by others would not have resulted in such a shift.

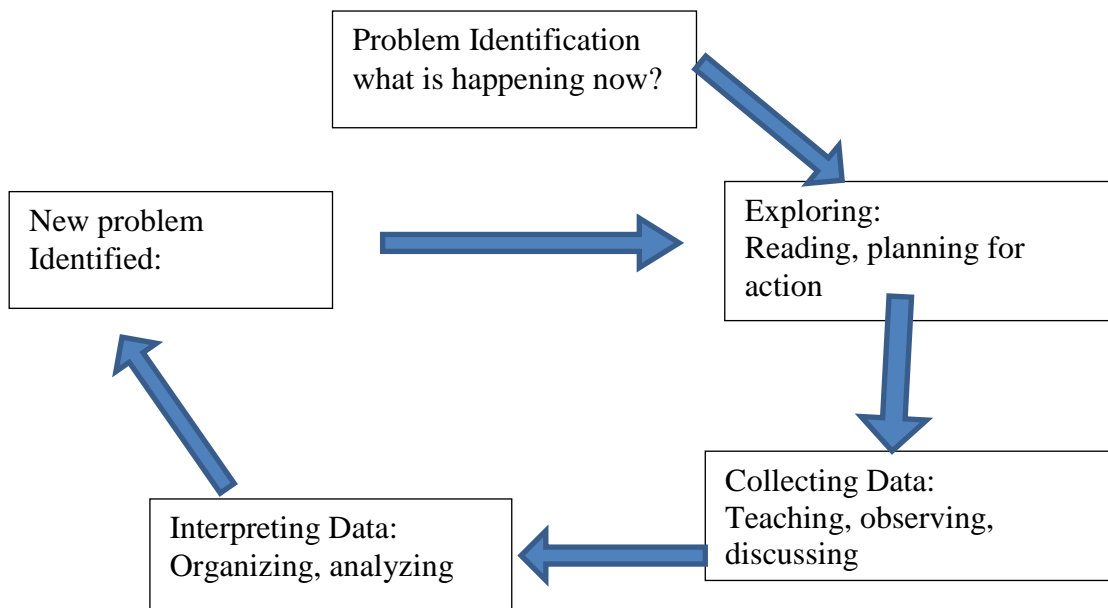
Fourthly, action research is a tool to understand teaching practice better. Action research enabled me to “evaluate, understand and then change” my practice (Bassegy, 1999:93). It gave me new opportunities to reflect on and to assess my teaching practice, to explore and to test new ideas. Action research offered me the opportunity to explore appropriate materials. It also allowed me to reflect and examine how I was developing critical reading skills in my student teachers (Cohen & Manion, 1980, as cited in Richards & Nunan, 1994). In addition, it offered me a chance to find alternative ways of problem solving thereby obtaining knowledge for classroom situations. Overall, through action research I learned to act and change my practice for the better, it enhanced my professionalism – as a knowledge maker, not just knowledge user, (McNiff, 1997). It is “a powerful method for determining change and for monitoring changes” (Bassegy (1998:93). Professional progression can be represented in schematic form as displayed below.

**Graph 5: Professional Schematic progression**



Finally, all action research is a spiral cyclical process (Calhoun, 1994 cited in Mills, 2007:15). The spiral cycles of this action research case study included: identification of a problem (what is happening now), reading/exploring and planning, collecting data (teaching, observing, discussing), organizing, analyzing and interpreting data. A new cycle emerged from the latter. The action research cycle can be represented in schematic form as displayed below.

**Graph 6: Action research cycle**



### 3.3 Sampling

I employed convenience and purposive sampling to choose the site of my research and the participants. I employed convenience sampling when I engaged the class 3B students who were easiest to work with because they were assigned to me for English Communication Skills,

(Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Purposive sampling suggests picking the cases to be included in the sample to serve specific needs in research (Cohen, et al., 2000). In my case, I carried out the research at the College where I teach because the research was set to enhance the teaching of critical reading skills to student teachers in Namibia. I did not need to ask special permission from the regional education office nor from the head office to observe someone else teaching because that was part of my job and a requirement for students to qualify as teachers. These arrangements reduced the cost involved in carrying out research.

I used the 3B class as my sample as these students were studying to become English Second Language teachers and expected to teach critical reading when they qualified as teachers, to select critical reading materials and to carry out an action research project in the teaching of English 2<sup>nd</sup> language as part of their curriculum. The class was under my care.

### **3.4 The rationale for the design of the lessons**

#### **3.4.1 Lesson one: Diagnostic assessment activity**

First, all the lessons provided students with clear and understandable learning targets from the outset. The main purpose of lesson one was to establish the students' critical reading experiences with a view to informing me about their improvement in reading a text critically because of my teaching (Cohen, et al., 2000; Muniz-Swicegood, 1994). Even though the diagnostic assessment activity also contributed to continuous refining, adjusting and developing the lessons, it was not primarily aimed at informing the lesson design. Both the first and the final assessment activities yielded the kind of information I needed to figure out how much the students knew about critical reading in order to do a comparison of their ability after they experienced my critical reading lessons.

For the test to measure students' prior knowledge and to reveal the progress they were making in critical reading, I took the following steps (see appendix C 1). I aligned the assessment questions to critical reading skills and the research goals; and carefully selected the words, avoiding phrasing questions with "*why*". Instead I used "*what* might be the reason for the author to have..." not "why did the author ..." as such a word very often leads to speculation, personal interpretation and circular debate (Thoman & Jolls , 2005) (see appendix C 1). I proofread the questions; piloted the questions on different classes of the same year group; marked the test and further streamlined the questions. Finally, I administered the test (see appendix C 1).

### **3.4.2 Lesson two: Identifying facts and opinions**

This lesson was aimed at laying a foundation for identifying fact and opinion. I wanted to empower students with the language we use to offer explanations and express opinions. I also wanted to provide students with purposes for reading to set the stage for critical reading and to encourage them to enhance their reading performance (Chappuis, 2005). I provided the students with handouts that contained lesson objectives, definition of facts and opinions, and the language used to state facts and express opinions (see appendix C 2).

I introduced students to the concept of metacognition in order for them to become aware of how our brains process written information before they began to read. This would allow them to monitor and control their own reading process and comprehension. They would realise that understanding can break down while reading and when that happened they could fix the problem, as discussed in chapter 2. I wanted them to replicate that strategy in their other reading activities in their later reading lives.

I provided students with a purpose for reading to sustain their attention throughout the entire reading process, as I wanted them to process text in one form and restate the text in a new form, as discussed in chapter 2. I deliberately deleted the title [Women and men equal at last] from the text.

The aim was for the students to learn to read critically, that is, reflecting and making judgments about the text ideas, analyzing and synthesizing text ideas with their own knowledge, as discussed in chapter 2. I wanted students to interpret the text in their social, cultural and political context. In addition, they would gain practical experience of facts and opinions by agreeing/disagreeing (see appendix C 3). I required them to work in groups to answer the questions and discuss why they thought what they thought. To enable students to share their individual understanding of the text with one another, I gave them flip charts on which to state their reasons. My aim was to empower students with the language we use to state facts, offer explanations and express opinions.

### **3.4.3 Lesson Three: Making inferences**

This lesson focused on developing students' abilities in making inferences to promote prediction as a reading strategy and to learn to base their opinions on textual evidence. I wanted to prepare them cognitively and to set their thinking in motion by bringing more thinking to the language to figure out what it really meant, as discussed in chapter 2. The students were told to select the most appropriate meaning of the heading of the text in order to stimulate and to sustain their interest in reading. I provided them with a copy of "Nothing short of radical reform will solve the education problem". I instructed the students to predict the meaning of the title. I also recorded some of their suggestions on the chalkboard.

The students needed to find out if their predictions were accurate and I wanted to use the feedback provided by students to review the text. In addition, students were required to start to filter the textual information and to develop an understanding of the text. I intentionally instructed them to read aloud the section of the passage that dis/proved their predictions.

I purposely instructed the students to set aside the article in order to discuss the features of a topic sentence. I wanted them to re-read the article later and to identify topic sentences, in pairs, and underline them. Students were asked to provide each paragraph with a title and to realize that the text had topic sentences. The aim was to lead them to the realization that texts construct ideas and realities in a particular way, as discussed in chapter 2. Equally, the students were encouraged to ask themselves: "what is the author really saying in this paragraph?" as discussed in chapter 2. This would give the students the skill to delete redundant information thereby laying a foundation for analysis, synthesis, and evaluation activities and would provide a context from which to stimulate reasoning and conclusions. I also wanted to improve students' confidence as readers and to reinforce comprehension, as discussed in chapter 2.

In order to explain inferences, during the last class of the day period, I purposely gave the students work to do. Ten minutes before the end of the period, I wrote on the board in capitals, "I AM WAITING". I deliberately looked at them in silence. I wanted those words to shout at them. I also wanted them to infer eventually that "I AM WAITING" suggests, "keep quiet", "sit still", "hand in your work and leave" and to lay a foundation for inference activities emanating from "I AM WAITING". I wanted the whole class to discuss and explain their interpretations and

reactions to “I AM WAITING” in order to understand making inferences through the latter activity. I also wanted them to understand that we sometimes fill in the missing bits of information that are not explicitly stated in the text, as discussed in chapter 2.

The idea was that the students would comprehend that making inferences suggests figuring out what the words mean on the basis of who is saying them, where you are and what else is going on, as discussed in chapter 2. Students should conclude that words could have different meanings and understand that words do not always mean what they literally say. I deliberately asked students if “I AM WAITING” would have the same meaning if a friend in the hostel had said those words to them five minutes before supper.

In order to strengthen what students had learned, I needed to link classroom knowledge to social life. I wanted students to probe the meaning of the oral text from a number of different perspectives and to arrive at a number of different interpretations. I wanted students to realize that not all instances of language require inferences. I therefore instructed them to find three examples of oral language requiring inferences that someone said to them, to someone else or on TV. I gave each student an inference question booklet as a homework assignment. I wanted the students to implement and develop critical reading strategies such as metacognition, making inferences based on textual evidence, and analysing textual information as discussed in chapter 2.

#### **3.4.4 Lesson Four: Adjectives**

This lesson introduced students to adjectives that shape opinions. First, I wanted students to have a basic knowledge about adjectives: the definition, roles, and the types of adjectives we have in English. Secondly, they needed to understand that adjectives of quality create both opinions and facts. We discussed and illustrated with “I bought a *white* car” (*white* observable adjective: a fact). Then we discussed I bought a *beautiful* white car (*beautiful*: opinion). Thirdly, I wanted students to understand that adjectives give a comprehensive factual picture so we discussed “Namibia has a *blue, white, green* and *red* flag”.

The students needed to notice that texts are not neutral or value/context-free, and to realize that writers select words to construct texts to foreground what they want and hide what was not

selected, as discussed in chapter 2. I hoped that the students would begin to observe and experience how adjectives can be maneuvered to fit a purpose. In addition, I wanted students to become aware that opinions and facts are found in the same sentence and article. Therefore, we deliberately discussed the flexibility of adjectives of quality, comparative adjectives and the formation of comparative adjectives. Similarly, we discussed the sentence: “Namibia has a *beautiful blue, white, green and red* flag”. I wanted students to discuss and identify adverbs, modal verbs, nouns of intention and value, rhetorical questions, pronouns and comment adverbs that are used in the linguistic construction of opinions. Finally, I wanted students to re-write the editorial text I had given them factually.

The students needed to be able to read and to decide what to believe or what not to believe, as discussed in chapter 2 and to activate their schemata. In addition, they would enhance their literal understanding of the text and assimilate text information with ease, as discussed in chapter 2. I also wanted them to connect textual information to their familiar experiences, to realize that reading is a social practice. In addition, students needed to interpret the text in their social, economic, political and cultural context, to comment on the similarities and the differences between their Namibian vision and “The Namibian” newspaper’s dream.

The students were required to respond to the subtexts of the questions and to understand how texts construct ideas and realities and finally to realize that anything that has been constructed can be deconstructed, as discussed in chapter 2. I wanted them to understand the text structure and argument and the key words writers use to *sequence* ideas. They needed to learn that the writer’s purpose is to take a position on some issue and justify it so they needed to begin to read and think seriously about what is going on in Namibia. I also wanted them to work collaboratively and talk ideas through together, which would lead to them being sceptical about what they read and not to take it to be true or correct, as discussed in chapter 2. Therefore, I gave them inference questions as a homework assignment.

#### **3.4. 5 Lesson Five: Emotive language**

This lesson introduced students to emotive language, another element of fact and opinion. Emotive language is something that makes people emotional so the students needed to realize that texts are not neutral receptacles of information. I wanted them to understand that texts are cultural artifacts, created for specific purposes and that people socially construct texts. I wanted

students to become conscious that writers promote particular interests and versions of reality, as discussed in chapter 2. Students need to understand that emotive language affects the way we feel about people, events and things.

I wanted students to become conscious that newspaper reports frequently use emotive language rather than factual or neutral language so they need to see how different writers create particular effects and how they convey ideas. Therefore, I gave students two newspaper reports from different newspapers, which reported the same incident. I instructed them to compare the reports, to identify emotive words and substitute them with less emotive words. I gave them a thesaurus and instructed them to identify strong words from the reports and replace those with less strong words.

#### **3.4.6 Lesson six: Assessing students' critical abilities**

The purpose of this lesson was to assess the students' critical reading competency after they had experienced reading text critically. I wanted to establish how much value the lesson unit had added to the students' lives and to note if students had moved from the initial level of critical reading abilities to the next level.

#### **3.5 Rationale for the choices for critical reading materials**

The reading materials needed to be consonant with the way in which critical theorists view reading so the materials should promote critical or reflective thinking, as discussed in chapter 2. In addition the texts should be worthy of scepticism and have the ability to enable students to learn about the world – social, political texts that have the potential to invite debate from the public. I also wanted authentic texts as the main framework for our interpretations. In addition, the students were to read real world, real-time readings, as discussed in chapter 2. The texts should expose students to a variety of language and show how language is used (Wallace 1992 Peacock 1997, cited in Berardo, 2006).

The chosen texts should move students from their existing stage of critical reading competence to a new one so they started with a less challenging text leading into a more challenging text whose information was not explicitly stated leaving room for inferences and judgment later on. The texts should debate social issues so the students would realize that reading is a process of thinking, sense making, deduction or rational analysis of reality, as discussed in chapter 2 (see

appendix C 4-6). I also wanted texts in which thinking was well structured and organized. Finally, the students needed to read everyday materials, which were readily available, and materials they would want to read in the future. Therefore, I provided them with simple and complex reading materials from magazines and newspapers for example: “Women and men equal at last” and “Nothing short of radical reform will solve the education problem”.

### **3.6 Data collection**

This study used qualitative data collection techniques even though quantitative data analysis was used to a limited extent as earlier stated. The primary data collection techniques, which are discussed in more detail below, included research journals, reflections from students, non-participant observation, a focus group interview, a diagnostic assessment activity and a sample of assessment activities.

#### **3.6.1 Diagnostic assessment tasks**

Before the series of lessons started, I gave the students an assessment activity (see appendix C 1) which they wrote within a given time. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the assessment activity served as a reference point against which I measured all improvements in students’ critical reading skills resulting from my teaching. In other words, the assessment activity informed me about the extent to which the intervention was achieving what it purported to achieve. At the end of the lesson unit, I once again gave the students a critical reading assessment activity.

#### **3.6.2 My notebook or learning log**

I kept a notebook where I described what I did, my thoughts, their influences, conclusions I came to, a specific approach I used and how the approaches played out in reality. I also recorded the engagement of students with the texts and with one another and with me as their lecturer stage-by-stage as the research unfolded, as recommended by McNiff, & Whitehead, (2005); Mills, (2007); Richards & Nunan, (1994). In fact, it was a working document, which served as both a record, and a source of reflective thinking, (Bassey, 1999).

The students were similarly requested to reflect individually on the lessons and to keep on giving me feedback on each individual lesson. Their reflections were guided by questions such as, what went well; what did not go well and what needed to be improved if the lessons were to be repeated. The reflections provided me with valuable window into their views about the lessons (Mills, 2007).

### **3.6.3 Students' written work**

I employed purposive sampling to select students' homework assignments, lesson evaluation and class activities that could provide me (and ultimately readers of this thesis) with insights into the students' learning experiences. The sample from students' homework assignments and class activities were selected according to three categories, namely: best, average and better work from both male and female students who attended classes regularly. The lesson evaluations are filed without alterations - as produced by the students.

### **3.6.4 Non-participant observer**

Generally, I perform most daily lecturing routines without much other professional interaction. For this research project, I needed an outside view of my lessons and to learn from a professional adult (Schmuck, 2006). I thus invited the English as a Second Language advisory teacher to observe and to critique the lesson. I alerted her (McNiff, 1997) to be aware of what the lesson was about; what I was doing; what the students were doing; what was going well; what was not going well; what needed improvement; and I welcomed other suggestions. However, it is worth noting that the non-participant observer was only able to view the lesson on the video and give me written feedback (see appendix, D 1). She could not physically be in the class because at the time when I implemented the lessons she had a tight schedule.

### **3.6.5 Audio and Video recording of critical reading lessons**

For this research, I used a video recorder as a tool to capture classroom events and interaction when I was fully engaged in teaching (Mills, 2007). Video enabled me to observe how students

made sense of the lesson; reflect on the process of the lesson and identify what worked and what did not work; and analyse interaction. A videoed record allows a close examination of the subject under scrutiny and it can provide viewers with an overall view of the subject. The researcher can also make use of it in presentations and in teaching. In my case, I enlisted the service of a college computer technician to shoot the video. Students might have resented being videotaped but as the technician was a familiar figure, he blended easily with the students and minimized this possibility.

I also used a tape recorder as a back up to ensure that valuable information was not lost. The purposes of audio recording were to re-listen and to analyze the process. Cohen, et al. (2004:117) contend that an audio recorder is a valuable tool researchers can use to ensure reliability which in this context refers to “consistency and replicability”. Although I did not transcribe the video recordings because (a) the research does not require analysis of interactions and body language of participants and; (b) video recorded data takes time to be transcribed and analyzed properly, I transcribed all the audio recordings.

### **3.6.6 Focus group interview**

At the end of the lesson unit, I held a focus group interview. The principal reasons were to collect sensitive qualitative data in a short time, to get students to talk about the researcher’s approach and manner, to allow students to support one another, to help students overcome or minimize fears of talking to the researcher about their attitudes and to solicit unintended views (Cohen, et al., 2004 p. 288). I also wanted to find out which ways of teaching critical reading students found to be effective and if the materials I selected and used promoted thinking reading/critical reading. These focus group interviews solicited unintended views. To illustrate my point an absorbed student said “... you see him scratching his head, holding like this”.

I held two focus group interviews. “There is no minimum or maximum number of focus group sessions recommended” but two sessions are enough for the research validity (Israel & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2008:unpaged). In the case of this study, I held two sessions of focus group interviews to gather enough data and to get a balanced view about the lessons and the researcher’s attitudes, (Cohen, et al., 2004). The first group consisted of eight respondents - 4 male and 4 females; the second session consisted of six respondents – three male and three females. In total,

I interviewed 14 out of 31 students – 7 male and 7 females. The students (respondents) were selected based on their boldness to express their views, class attendance, reasoning ability, commitment, hard work, and frankness.

The actual interview started with students sharing their personal data to create a relaxed atmosphere. I played the role of a facilitator. I asked students broader questions about the lessons and gradually narrowed it to specific questions (see appendix E 1). I asked them one question at a time and gave several students time to respond to a question before I introduced another question. I used a semi-structured interview schedule. I used an audio recorder to capture discussions. All the interviews happened when classes were suspended for exams. They all took place in the morning (between 8h00 and 9h00) at my work place (college), in the auditorium situated in the library where distractions were minimal.

The questions were semi-structured. To ensure their success I piloted the questions on a colleague to check their clarity, eliminate ambiguities or difficult words and gain feedback on the type of questions. It also gave me the opportunity to check if the questions had the ability to uncover the students' attitudes, avoid asking questions that seem to suggest answers, and to check the appropriateness of the questions vis-à-vis research questions (Cohen, et al., 2004:261).

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Once data had been gathered from different sources I analysed it using the following evaluation questions, what went well; what did not go well, and what needed to be improved. With these questions and the goals in mind, I re-read the data, re-listened to the audio recorder, and re-watched the videos and I kept asking myself which activities and teaching strategies improved the critical reading skills of my students (Mills, 2007). In that way the effective and non-effective methods the effectiveness of teaching/learning materials and the unexpected outcomes (Schmuck, 2006) emerged. The questions also encouraged me to confront my bias.

Thereafter holistic interpretations (the findings) were presented in a narrative style in relation to the research goals. The analysed data came from the journals, the non-participant's notes, focus group interviews and the activities. Finally, I triangulated the data by comparing and contrasting the information obtained using different methods.

### **3.8 Ethics**

The research was carried out within Rhodes University's Department of Education's ethical guidelines. Ethics has to do with moral values and right conduct (Schmuck, 2006). I established a moral relationship with all those concerned. First, I approached the rector of the college in person for permission to conduct this research. An official letter followed that discussion (see appendix A 2). The head of department for languages was informed orally and granted me permission. Likewise, I arranged and met the education officer – advisory services to explain my intentions and those of the research to her and I followed that up with a letter inviting her to observe my lessons (see appendix A 3). She gave her consent orally.

The researcher considered the students too. A week before the actual research project started, I met and informed the participants – the 3B class who are my students - about my role as a researcher; my intentions; my expectations and their right to withdraw from the research if they deemed it fit. I also talked about my obligation as a researcher to respect individual privacy. I then sought their consent and asked them to sign a letter of consent (see appendix A 4) as research participants and another letter to grant me permission to use their pictures and to videotape them. They all signed the letters. Similarly, I wrote a letter (see appendix A 1) to the rector asking for permission to interview the students. In whatever I did I sought their informed consent.

### **3.9 Validity**

Validity refers to factors that make the research findings valid or believable. The multiple tools I used to collect data (Mills, 2007) are factors that make this research valid. Multiple data sources help researchers to validate the research findings. One potential threat to the validity of this study was that I might have lacked the objectivity to critically reflect on my pedagogical shortcomings. To minimize this I have presented the non-participant observer's views - and the views of students in chapter 4. I also used formative assessment activities to test pre- and post-knowledge. In addition, all the data collected were triangulated - compared and contrasted with one another. The lessons are available on both the audio and video recordings.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present an analysis of the data collected during the research process. The data is analysed in light of the research goals that, as stated in chapter 3, were finding effective ways to teach critical reading; developing materials for this purpose and heightening self-awareness. The lessons were analysed in terms of the following inquiry: what went well in the lesson? What did not go well in the lesson? What needed to be improved if the lessons were to be repeated in the future? I read through the transcribed typed tape recordings responses of the student focus group interviews line by line and coded the data. To illustrate the point, when a student said that they learned, I annotated: “students learnt” and when a student said they could use the knowledge in the future, I annotated “knowledge is useful”. And when students said “somewhere you were not really good because ...” I annotated “needing improvement”. This gave me a large number of categories. The researcher’s log, students’ written reflections and non-observer’s notes were analysed in a similar fashion. All the positive points were apportioned to “what went well” negative to “what did not go well” and suggestions under “what need to be improved if the lesson were repeated”.

Then, I re-read the lessons and the raw data simultaneously step by step. The claims were derived from this reading and comparing and sometimes combining the students’ reflections with focus group interview and/or with the researcher’s journal and/or with the comments of the non-participant observer and formative assessment activities and as a result of giving it afterthought. However, sometimes claims were derived from one source. Thus, *note here that to indicate the specific sources from which findings derived in the analysis of lesson 2 - 5, I used codes: SI (student interview); SR (Students reflections); OB (Non participant observer notes) and JR (Journal or learning log).*

Also note that lesson 1, here below, was not analysed in the evaluative questions framework because its aim was to establish the students’ critical reading experiences.

Below, I analyse the first action research lesson (diagnostic assessment activity) which was set to establish the students' critical reading experiences.

#### **4.2 Lesson 1: Diagnostic assessment activity**

*Note that at the outset of this action research project I gave students a diagnostic assessment task to, as stated in chapter 3, establish their critical reading experiences, and after I had taught the critical reading lessons, I also gave them a summative assessment activity to assess the improvements they had made. The diagnostic test analysis is placed at the beginning of this chapter and the summative assessment analysis is placed at the end of this same chapter. The reader may choose to read these two together before going into the details of the report.*

Of the thirty one students in class 3B, six students were absent so only twenty five students participated in the assessment activity. Note that the analysis of the answers to the diagnostic assessment activity does not follow a numerical order but rather categories i.e. factual, analysis, inferences and so on.

##### **A. Factual questions:**

Questions 1 and 2 required students to recall knowledge about the kind of writing and publications they knew. None of the students answered the question correctly. The answers to the questions (1 and 2) revealed that the students did not have knowledge about different types of writing nor did they have knowledge about different kinds of publication.

##### **B. Reading critically**

###### **B 1. Making inferences:**

Inferences were treated as a specific goal, bearing in mind that most questions required students to infer as the ultimate practice in critical reading.

Question 4: "To whom is the author writing"? The question required students to muster information and elements from the text and draw reasonable conclusions, as discussed in chapter 2. No student provided the correct answer to this question. Some of the answers were "to the public reader" and "to the nation", "the African leaders". The answers they provided revealed that the students lacked an understanding of the writer's intended audience. The

answer “to the nation”, for example, includes people who cannot read. Furthermore, the answers suggest that students did not draw from their life experience about human nature to reach a reasonable conclusion. The answers such as “the African leaders” suggest that students made use of linguistic clues such as the structure of the sentence: “leaders must not think that ...”

Question 5: “What in the article suggests that?” This question required students to support their thinking with textual evidence. None of the students provided the correct answer.

Question 6: “What has the author assumed to be the facts/truth?” This question required students to think carefully about what is implied in the text to be true. It also required students to see the implication of the position the writer was advocating and drawing out or constructing meaning from the elements in a reading text. Of the answers, 44% (11 students) restated the text, “SWAPO should not think it will be there forever”, as a fact. Such answers suggest that students got them by a mechanical process, which does not involve understanding, 24% (6 students) left the spaces blank and 32% (8 students) gave answers without substance such as “on political issue”.

Question 7: “What suggests that in the article”? See question 5 for the reading skills the question demanded. Only 4% (1 student) provided the correct quotes. The student quoted, “leaders must uphold the supreme law of their countries and ...” 96% (24 students) quoted wrongly.

Question 8: “What is the underlying assumption?” Students were required to see what the writer implied and to construct the thinking of the author in their mind, as discussed in chapter 2. For this question, 48% (12 students) provided wrong answers e.g., “I think this article is all about awakening of leaders”. 52% (13 students) left the spaces blank. The answers also suggest that the students did not understand the key phrase ‘underlying assumption’.

Question: 9. 96% (24 students) could not interpret, “leadership can be equated to soccer skills, there is a summit and a slope, when the slope comes, one must exit gracefully”. The answers suggest that the majority of the students could not infer the words “*a summit*” and “*a slope*” in their context to bring understanding to information in the text that is not literally stated. Only 4% (1 student) provided the closest interpretation: “he meant in leadership there are success and failure and once failure comes as a leader you must ...”

Question 10: “Looking at the whole text, what conclusion does the author reach about the issue he raised?” The demand of this question is similar to that of question 8. 40% (10 students) gave incorrect answers, 48% (12 students) did not react to the question and 12% (3 students) gave correct answers. These included, “many people of the countries end up suffering in such leadership of low skill,” suggesting that students used linguistic clues such as the structure of the

sentence and the form of the word to arrive at the answer. They got the answers by a mechanical process, which does not involve understanding.

Question 22: “What is the claim or thesis of the article?” This question required students to consider relevant information; deduce the consequences flowing from data; and trace the various reasons the editor offers, to discover the main claim, as discussed in chapter 2. The answer “African leaders think they are bound to rule forever” which 52% (13 students) provided suggests that they used linguistic clues such as the structure of the sentence, “African leaders think they are there to rule forever” and the word “bound” to arrive at the answers. This is a mechanical process, which does not involve understanding. 48% (12 students) did not answer the question.

Question 30: “What is the problem the writer has identified his readers have ...?” As discussed in chapter 2, students were required to identify unstated assumptions, constructing a way to represent a main conclusion and the various reasons given to support or criticize it, by outlining the relationship of sentences or paragraphs to each other and to the main purposes of the passage. 40% (10 students) left spaces blank. 32% (8 students) provided wrong answers, 28% (7 students) gave the correct answers such as, “Leaders do not want to relinquish power even when it is obvious”.

Question 31: “What according to the writer is the cause of the problem?” This question required students to formulate a synthesis of related ideas into a coherent perspective, as discussed in chapter 2. 12% (3 students) provided the correct answers such as “African leaders; leadership styles”, 48% (12 students) provided wrong answers. For example, “the way of directing” and 40% (10 students) did not answer the question.

## **B 2. Synthesizing:**

Question 3: “What is the reason for the author to have written this article?” This required students to investigate the writer, his career and his interest and to combine that with their prior knowledge about human nature to infer the motives for the author to have written the article. 12% (3 students) provided answers without substance such as, “he wanted to clearly address pupil”, 24% (6 students) did not write anything and 64% (16 students) provided correct answers that were based on explicitly stated information. The answers suggest that students used linguistic clues. That is, the structure of the sentence, they quoted “SWAPO has been fooling them and it is time they...” added their own words “to make the innocent people open their

eyes". They got the answers by a mechanical process, which does not involve understanding. All the answers provided illustrated the inability of students to interrogate the text deeply. Students did not ask themselves why the author would bother to give "a piece of advise [sic]". The answers suggest that students did not investigate the text for evidence, which might have led to a greater understanding of the intentions and motives of the writer.

Question 20: "The writer disapproves of the leadership. What is the motive for the author to disapprove the current leadership?" This question demanded of students the same knowledge as was required for question 3 above. 4% (1 student) answered the question correctly. She wrote "because he has seen people suffering ...", 72% (18 students) answered the question incorrectly and 24% (6 students) did not answer the question.

### **B 3. Analyzing:**

Question 11: "What is the relationship between the reader and the writer?" The question entails close, careful and systematic examination of the writer's word choices, which reveal the relationship of the author and his readers, as discussed in chapter 2. 68% (18 students) left spaces blank and 32% (8 students) provided wrong answers. Therefore, none of the students answered the question correctly.

Question 12: "What in the text suggests that?" See question 5 for the question demand. No student provided the correct answer.

Question 16: "Do certain sections make you feel pleased, guilty, angry and saddened?" This closed question required students to select one word. Any selection was considered correct and as such, all the answers were accepted as correct.

Question 17: "Which section is that?" The question required students to provide textual evidence for the section that aroused their emotions. 92% (23 students) correctly identified a sentence such as "innocent people ...", "taking away the productive land ..." 8% (2 students) left the spaces blank.

Question 18: "Do you think the author intended that effect?" 48% (12 students) wrote "yes" suggesting that the author intentionally created the effect and 52% (13 students) wrote "no" suggesting that the effects were accidental.

Question 19: "If he intended that, how did he create that effect?" 48% (12 students) provided wrong answers, such as "he looked at all the inconvenient situations that ..." 52% (13 students) did not answer the question. Therefore, even though some students correctly identified emotive

words, they were not aware that the author used those words to convey particular meanings and emotions, as discussed in chapter 2.

Question 21: “Explain in your own words, how the author reached his conclusion”. The question required students to identify elements needed to draw reasonable conclusions by looking at the examples the writer gave. It also required students to trace back the various reasons the author offered. 32% (8 students) did not answer the question, 44% (11 students) wrote wrong answers and only 24% (6 students) answered the question correctly.

Question 26: “Does the writer present both sides of an argument, for and against?” The question required students to examine how the author balanced his argument. 24% (6 students) did not answer the question and 36% (9 students) gave incorrect answers. 40% (10 students) answered the question correctly. For example, “He didn’t! He was against but what he wrote in the text is fact ...”

Question 28: The writer poses a question: “Where have you seen a President who allows people to grab productive land violently, inconsiderate of economic outcomes? Which West can be blamed in such an exercise?” What is the reason? The question demand (see question 19). 56% (14 students) provided incorrect answers. For example, “to bring the clear picture to the reader of what he is talking about and to provide supportive facts” and 44% (11 students) left spaces blank.

#### **B 4. Evaluating:**

Question 13: “Considering the whole text, what does the author want us to believe?” This question required students to deduce the consequences flowing from the article. 8% (2 students) provided acceptable answers. For example, “She wants us to believe that it is all our failure ...”, 12% (3 students) left the spaces blank and 80% (20 students) gave incorrect answers e.g. “She wants us to believe that African leaders are taking laws in their hands ...”

Question 14: “Do you believe him?” This question required students to relate messages to their own experience, make judgments about the veracity, quality and relevance of messages and decide either to believe or not believe them. 12% (3 students) did not answer the question, 76% (19 students) indicated that they believed the author and 12% (3 students) indicated that they did not believe the author. Both “yes” and “no” were accepted as correct answers. However, students needed to justify their answers in the question below.

Question 15: “What in the text makes you believe him/makes you not to believe him?” The question required students to quote the relevant part of the text. It also required students to use logical reasoning and argument in relation to evidence in both text and context. 56% (14 students) provided correct answers such as “... leaders are hard workers from the starting and lazy when they well settled”, 32% (8 students) gave incorrect answers e.g. “He gave an example Zimbabwe president who allows his people to grab productive land violently, inconsiderate of economic outcomes” and 12% (3 students) did not answer the question. The wrong answers and no answers suggest that the answers to questions 13 and 14 were arbitrary.

Question 25: “If we take this line of thinking seriously, what will be the implication?” The question required students to bring content knowledge to their understanding of the text. 40% (10 students) provided wrong answers and 36% (9 students) did not answer the question while 24% (6 students) wrote correct answers.

Question 26: “If we fail to take this line of thinking seriously, what will be the implication?” The question required students to bring content knowledge to their understanding of the text. 24% (6 students) left spaces blank while 16% (4 students) provided wrong answers and 36% (9 students) answered the question correctly.

Question: 27 “Has the author used facts or opinions?” As discussed in chapter 2, this question required students to recall knowledge about facts and opinions and to evaluate the quality of a message based on its content to decide if the author used both fact and opinion or not. 12% (3 students) did not answer the question, 28% (7 students) answered correctly “The author used both facts and opinion” and 60% (15 students) gave incorrect answers; they did not know the author used both facts and opinion.

Question: 28. “What are some of the examples of fact and opinion?” This question required students to draw examples of facts and opinions from the text to support their claim. 12% (3 students) gave the correct example e.g. “Voters are human beings ...” (fact), 28% (7 students) did not answer the question and 88% (22 students) provided incorrect answers. In the final analysis, the answers to the question revealed that the majority did not know the difference between facts and opinions.

Question: 29: “Did the argument you read change the way you see leaders in Namibia?” As discussed in chapter 2, this question required students to evaluate the quality of a message based on its content and form. In the case of this question, both “yes” and “no” answers were accepted as correct. 68% (17 students) provided correct answers. Some wrote “yes”. Reason “After hearing [reading] that they electorates belong to the ruling party which leads some people

to think of corruption”, and others wrote “no”. Reason “I always had same the feelings ...” 4% (1 student) misunderstood the question and thus wrote “It cannot change since that some of the leaders are so ignorant ...” 28% (7 students) did not answer the question.

**Table 3**

In summary, students’ answers can be tabulated as follows.

<b>A. Factual: Total No. questions 2</b>		
<b>Questions</b> →	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Correct →	-	-
Incorrect →	25	25
No answer →	-	-
Total number of candidates	25	25

- No student knew the kind of publication and style of writing they were dealing with

**Table 4**

<b>B. Inferring: Total questions: 12</b>												
<b>Questions</b> →	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>
Correct →	-	-	11	1	-	1	3	-	-	4	-	1
Incorrect →	25	23	8	24	12	24	10	13	14	11	19	18
No answer →	-	2	6	-	13	-	12	12	11	10	6	6
Candidates	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25

- 90% - 100% could not combine prior knowledge and text knowledge
- 90% - 100% could not provide textual support
- 12% - 16% could infer on the basis of explicitly stated information
- 44% provided the correct examples of facts

**Table 5**

<b>C. Analysing: Total questions: 9</b>									
<b>Questions</b> →	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>24</b>
Correct →	-	-	25	23	25	-	6	10	3
Incorrect →	8	12	-	-	-	12	11	9	13
No answer →	17	11	-	2	-	13	8	6	9
Total students →	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25

- All either felt guilty, sad, annoyed by a section of the text they were reading
- 92% correctly identified sentences that made them feel sad etc.
- 40% knew that the writer used both fact and opinion in the same text

**Table 6**

<b>D. Evaluating: Total questions: 8</b>									
<b>Questions</b> →	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	
Correct →	2	19	14	6	6	7	3	17	
Incorrect →	20	3	8	10	10	15	22	1	
No answer →	3	3	3	9	9	3	-	7	
Total number of students	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	

- 80% could not construct the thinking of the author in their mind or draw conclusions about what the author wanted them to believe
- 76% indicated that they either believed or did not believe the author
- 56% correctly quoted from the text

### **4.2.1 Conclusion**

The diagnostic assessment activity informed me that some students could correctly quote from the text. They also correctly indicated yes or no or that they believed or did not believe the author when a question required them to do exactly that. However, they could not justify when they were required to do so. The answers, thus suggest that they guessed and answered the question based on the structure of the sentences and the form of the words even though they did not understand the text. They employed a mechanical process - answering without truly comprehending the text. They could not read critically.

### **4.2.2 The implications of the diagnostic assessment activity for the subsequent teaching**

The empirical data presented here above suggested that if I had to move students from their existing critical reading competency to a new one, I had to do some considerable thinking, intensive preparation accompanied by serious teaching and scaffolding. That is modeling; encouraging the students to work hard in groups, pairs and individually; understanding the thinking behind the wrong and irrelevant answers; being task-orientated (Sotto, 1994); focusing on helping them to generate understanding and so on. It also suggested starting with an easier text and tasks with a view to avoiding students developing a negative and defensive attitude. I now provide an analysis of the four critical reading lessons I taught in order to achieve these goals.

## **4.3 Lesson 2**

This lesson introduced students to the concept of facts and opinions.

### **4.3.1 What went well in the lesson?**

Note that at the beginning of each individual lesson, I first provided students with copies of the learning outcome or lesson objectives, then I clarified them. Overall all students and the non-participant observer viewed this as good (SI; SR; OB & JR). For example the non-participant observer wrote that it was good that I provided and clarified the objectives to students, “giving attention to unfamiliar words”. A student said that having objectives means you are really

working according to them. Another student said that objectives helped them to focus exactly on fact and opinion.

The discussion of facts and opinions went well (OB; SI & SR). When the students understood the learning outcome, I provided them with two sets of handouts. The first one discussed what a fact is. The second handout discussed what an opinion is. The third one listed the phrases we use to express opinions. We first discussed the nature of facts and thereafter of opinions. The non-participant observer noted that the question to students as to whether what they believed was a fact or an opinion was a good penetrating question, which evoked their critical thinking.

Categorizing phrases according to their functions went well (OB & SR). After the discussions of fact and opinion, I provided students with the phrases: I agree; it is fairly certain that...; etc. I instructed the students to categorize the phrases in the table shown below in their groups.

**Table 7**

Preferences	Disagree	Giving reason/offering explanations
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The non-participant observer wrote “this was a far better approach and learners were observed to have renewed energy and interest”. A student wrote that the lesson went well because he learnt many new things that he never knew before and that he enjoyed it.

The first reading text was appropriate from the start (JR & SR). After categorizing and discussing the phrases of facts and opinion, I gave students an easy reading text from which I omitted the heading “Men and women - Equal at last.” A student wrote that he understood the text because it did not contain many difficult words or new words. Another student wrote “the English used in the text is clear that is why I understood it”.

I instructed students to read silently and to provide the text with a title, which they did. Together as a class, we clarified any misunderstandings vis-à-vis what the text meant. Students investigating the tough social questions of equality through an appropriate text went well as they found the topic familiar (SR & SI). Through this text and exercise, students learned new and

relevant ideas about what was going on in Namibia. A student wrote “a short story which you introduced with attracts our mind or our attention” [sic]. A participating student wrote that what she read, she had seen happening in Rundu – “male and woman selling in the street”.

Students re-reading and combining prior social and textual knowledge to form opinions went well (SI; SR; OB & JR). Following the discussion about the title, I instructed the students to individually re-read the text silently once again and then to “agree” or “disagree” or “not take a stand” vis-à-vis the argument in the text. After students had finished reading, I drew their attention to the labels “I agree”; “I disagree” and “I do not take a stand”, which I posted on the wall at different spots in the classroom. I instructed them to go and to sit under them. When students had gathered and sat under the various options “I agree” and “I disagree”, I split each of those two big groups into a further two groups resulting in four smaller groups. The non-participant observer wrote that it was an excellent move to divide the students into groups.

The students thinking about their thinking went well (SR; OB & JR). Following the above activity and while in their respective groups, I gave each group a flip chart and a koki pen. I instructed the students to share the reasons why they agree or disagreed. I also instructed each group to select a note taker who noted down their points. The students got to work. I circulated around the class encouraging the students to think. The non-participant observer noted, “The students recorded on chart paper their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing. EXCELLENT; learner-centred *and* an application of critical thinking”. A student wrote that she found the part where they had to disagree about gender equality in Namibia very interesting.

#### **4.3.2 What did not go well in the lesson?**

There were too many activities for one period (SR & JR). This lesson stretched from defining fact/opinion to discussing and distinguishing facts from opinion. Even though students found the activities helpful and interesting, a student wrote that they were forced to leave out some of the activities because there were too many. Similarly, another student wrote that there were too many activities.

The metacognition exercise was not given its due attention (OB & JR). After students had categorized and discussed the phrases of facts and opinions (discussed in the previous section), I

instructed them to set aside whatever they were doing and to pay attention. I then asked what students would think had somebody brought them a wrapped gift in the class. Some said that they would first wonder what the gift might be. I also added that the students might wonder who might have sent the gift. I concluded the discussion by telling students that reading works on the same basis. However, the discussion was too brief. I thought that those student teachers were aware of how reading happens because teaching reading was an intrinsic part of their curriculum. However, when I gave students “Nothing short of radical reform will solve the education problem”, a challenging text, I realized that the latter was not the case. A student wrote “The article was confusing and the lecturer did not clearly explain on how we should deal with it”. I noted that students were not aware of how their brain is processing information as they are reading and as a result, they could not sort the sentences. The non-participant observer noted, “The analogy of an unfamiliar wrapped gift to introduce prediction was a brilliant idea. However, there was much more room for expansion with this. The exercise was too brief”.

My underlying assumption about a supportive learning environment is a cause for concern (OB & JR). I believed and still do believe that meaningful learning can only happen in a relaxed atmosphere, students talk freely to each other and to their lecturer. Furthermore, I believed that such an environment motivates shy students to take part in active learning. However, in this study I was made aware that such beliefs culminate in a few students competing for time to say something. They also threw in spontaneous answers and talked at once. The non-participant observer wrote that the learning environment was physically conducive but that at times students were far too noisy.

The activities demanded more time than I had anticipated (SI; SR & JR). The lesson unit in general, often used activities as a way of learning. That is, I divided the students in groups/pairs, announced the topic and the learning target of the lesson and immediately gave them the activities: reading, answering, discussing, and made the instruction clear, (Sotto, 1994). I did not always first explain the topic or strategy and then give students an opportunity to put it into practice. Explanations were only done when necessary. Such lessons require a lot of time. A student wrote that the class activities were very interesting and challenging and that they kept them busy throughout the lesson. “I have learnt a lot of things in this lesson.” This particular lesson required students to have a great deal of time to attend to all the activities properly and satisfactorily, but I did not afford students sufficient time. A student noted that I needed to give

them enough time to read the text because reading a text critically requires much time. Similarly, another student wrote, "Enough time should be given to the students to complete the activity".

Students needed opportunities to read aloud (SR & OB). In my mind, I thought that students should only read aloud when learning to pronounce words and to articulate fluently in reading (Graves, et al., 2007). I also thought that reading aloud promotes the skill of seeing, deciphering and producing sound. I did not think that students needed to read aloud in a critical reading lesson because this demands careful thinking in the act of reading. I sometimes read aloud speedily when the need arose. However, the non-participant observer noted, "... allow students more opportunities to read the sentences/answers aloud rather than the teacher always doing so. Students need as much practice in reading and speaking in the class as time will allow".

#### **4.3.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson was repeated?**

First, I would break the lesson into two separate lessons (SI; SR & JR). The first lesson would start from the learning outcome of the lesson. The next lesson would start with reading. I also would abide by planned time. If the lesson were divided into two, it would allow students time to finish all the activities, and by keeping to the set time, the lesson would finish in good time. A student wrote "About the teaching I would say the activities must be more on different occasions [sic] but few in numbers to allow learners/students to finish on the time planned". Another student said that I was supposed to have given students a limited time for discussions.

Maintaining discipline, particularly allowing students to talk freely to each other and to me was one of those things I took for granted and paid little attention to (SI; OB & JR). I had difficulty in making students listen to one another in a plenary session. I would sometimes shout to make them listen to one another. A student said "...because students had to argue upon points and if this sort of lesson has to be taught in the future, I think the only thing that there should be specific points given to student to argue upon". I have realized that quiet students' effective learning can be disrupted with free talk. I have stopped shouting at students to keep quiet. I tell students that I only welcome one response at a time. In addition, I pose a question and pause to observe students and for students to digest the question and then ask a particular student to answer (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & William, 2003). This arrangement encourages students to formulate well thought out answers and answer in an orderly manner.

## **4.4 Lesson 3**

The goal of this lesson was to introduce students to making inferences.

### **4.4.1 What went well in the lesson?**

I gave students an appropriate, challenging reading text: “Nothing short of radical reform will solve the education problem” (see appendix C4). Challenging here refers to a long text whose ideas invited critical thinking. The words fitted the nature of the debate (SI; SR & JR). A student wrote that they sometimes enjoyed the language the writer used. Another student said that the text made her think critically. She felt that such a challenging lesson was the kind of lesson she always wanted to be in.

The text was appropriate for a critical reading lesson (SR). Appropriate here has to do with addressing an issue relevant to the readers, who in this case were students who were studying towards becoming professional teachers. The text addressed an educational issue and thus served the needs and interests of the students both in and outside the college. A student wrote “The reading of the article was good because it made us read and understand it, even though there were difficult words”.

Making inferences from the title went well (OB & JR). I gave students “Nothing short of radical reform will solve the education problem” (reading text). Then I instructed them to read the title only. After that, I instructed them to predict the theme on that basis. Several students cited what they thought was the likely theme of the text. I wrote five possible themes on the board. Then we prioritized the themes from the most probable to the least probable. I instructed students to read the text. After students finished reading, we discussed the most suitable theme. The non-participant observer noted that making inferences from the title of the article was an excellent idea. “This activity was learner-centred and required them to think critically”.

Helping students to understand a topic sentence went well (SR & JR). After the prediction, confirmation and termination activity, I instructed students to put aside their reading texts. Then I asked them what a topic sentence was. One student provided a good explanation. I added that

a topic sentence triggers interest and leaves the readers in suspense, expecting them to read on to find out. After that explanation, I read aloud the topic sentence, which was the first sentence in the first paragraph. I asked students to tell me the meaning of the sentence. Silence fell. I decided to help students to outline the relationship of sentences to each other. I read aloud "...we see once again a mass wringing of hands" (the first part of the sentence). I asked them what the latter meant. A student responded: "We see people pointing hands at..." "To whom?" I followed up. "At teachers!" a student continued. "And who?" I cut in again, "And government". "Good!" I said. After students understood the first part of the sentence, I read the second part and repeated the steps above. Then I asked the students to work out the meaning of the whole sentence. They did. I asked students if the writer explained what she meant with that sentence. The students responded: "No"! [The writer did not explain] I then said: "That is a topic sentence". A student noted that I clearly explained why the first paragraph should have such a title and such a topic sentence. Another student also wrote that I helped students to understand a topic sentence.

Providing a practical application of title to paragraphs went well (SI; & OB). Following the explanation of a topic sentence, I instructed the students to re-read the text and thereafter provide a heading for each paragraph. Students could not provide a heading independently. So, I instructed them to re-read paragraph one individually and silently. Then I asked the students to tell me the problems the writer had talked about in that paragraph. Students read the paragraph again. After a while a student said [a couple of them were still reading] "Learners failing exams". I said: "Good!" In addition, I wrote: "1. Learners are failing exams". "What else?" I asked. Another student said: "Irrelevant curriculum". "Excellent", I said. I wrote: "2. irrelevant curriculum". "Were those the only problems addressed in the paragraph?" I asked. A student said: "No!" "And bad teachers?" I suggested: "Yes!" I wrote: "3. Incompetent teachers". Then I stepped back from the board and asked: "What should the title be for paragraph one?" A student fixed his eyes on the chalkboard and said: "Incompetent teachers and irrelevant curriculum". We discussed the latter in light of the paragraph and accepted the proposed title. Then I instructed the students to re-read, discuss, identify and underline the topic sentences and to provide titles for all the paragraphs in their small groups. The students got to work. I circulated in the class encouraging them to apply their thinking. A student said: "You like asking us critical questions, what make you think that is the right idea for that paragraph? And we were discussing, discussing then we got a clear picture of what the paragraph means". The non-participant observer wrote that

asking the students to re-read the article and to underline the topic sentences and to give new headings for each paragraph helped students to understand the content.

Summarising the text succinctly was good (SI; SR; OB & JR). After students provided headings, I gave each group a blank A4 page. I told them to imagine that they had been invited to a teachers' gathering to deliver the same messages within 3 minutes. I told them to review the text and write the important points only. After they had finished, I told individual groups to join other groups. I instructed the combined groups to discuss the differences and similarities in their notes and to agree on the most important points. Then I took other A4 pages, cut them into three smaller pieces, and gave each group a piece. I instructed them to further streamline their notes. A student wrote that students who did not understand the text at the outset got a clue when I asked them to summarise the text. Another student wrote that summing-up the text was 'great'.

Helping students to make inferences went well (SR & JR). Ten minutes before the period ended and while many groups were still busy summarizing, I wrote: "I AM WAITING"! (Santman, 2003). I stood still and looked at the students in silence. A student read the words I had written. He then alerted his group. The group prepared to pick up their summaries and gave one paper to one student who then walked towards me. He probably wanted to hand in the paper. Other group members also stood up, I guess they wanted to leave the class. I immediately instructed them to take their seats. I then instructed the rest of the students who were still busy writing to stop and pay attention. I also made those students aware of "I AM WAITING". Then I asked, "When you read this (pointing at the words), what did you do?" One of the students who wanted to leave the class said: "I wanted to hand in the papers?" "Why?" I asked. "Because you wrote I AM WAITING". He answered. "Does that mean give me your papers?" Some giggles. A different student said: "No, it's not specific, it's too broad". "Good", I said. "But, when this guy saw what I wrote, he picked up his papers. Why?" I asked. "Ya, the only thing you gave us were papers", the student replied. "Ok, did I AM WAITING mean give me my papers?" I repeated the question. "In this case, we were busy writing and then you wrote I AM WAITING. So, we thought you are waiting for your papers", the student continued. "So, when I wrote I AM WAITING I did not just want you to know that I am waiting. I meant I wanted my papers back because I gave you papers?" I asked. Students then said: "Yes!" After that, I said: "Now, you live in the hostel and it is five o'clock in the afternoon. Your friend comes and stands in your door with his clean cup and says, "I AM WAITING". "Are you going to pick up papers and give them to him?" "No!" Students replied. One student then said: "It depends". "Depends from what"? I asked, "... to the situation".

“Yes!” I said and then I wrote: situation. “Where you are”, the student continued. “Good!” I said and wrote: “where you are”. “Who is saying that?” another student added. “Yes, good!” I said and wrote the latter. After a few minutes, another student added: “and the relationship”! “How does relationship tell us what the person is up to?” I asked. “Because if a teacher says something, it is different if that is said by a friend”, the student explained. I said: “good” and wrote: “relationship”. I then asked: “What else?” There was no response. I then added: “When?” Then I said: “all those factors give us a clue what ‘I am waiting’ means at the time of speaking and that is making inferences”. I then defined making inferences as “bringing more thinking to language to figure out what the person really means”, (Santman, 2005:68) simultaneously referring to the process we went through. A student wrote that I was so helpful to the students. Another student wrote that students were able to make inferences or infer the words.

Practical application to strengthen making inferences went well (JR). Following the inferences of “I AM WAITING”, I paired the students and gave them a chart on which they had to write examples as homework. I instructed the students to complete the chart with oral language that required a reader to make inferences someone said to them or to someone else or on TV (Santman, 2005).

**Table 8 a**

Literal words	Other meanings	What they really mean	How do we know
I am going	Departing, resigning, dying	Dying	Speaker in hospital

**Table 9**

Then we discussed the answers. Some of the students’ charts looked like this one below.

Literal words	Other meanings	What they really mean	How do we know
I am destroying	I am damaging I’m vandalizing I	I am vandalizing	the speaker was leaning against the wall close to

	am breaking		the window
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This chart suggests that students thought that: a) all language required inferences; b) making inferences was easy; c) inferring was restating explicitly stated language. I noted this exercise is good in that students have the opportunity to infer and through this activity students can see how difficult it is to infer.

Clarifying and correcting the misunderstandings went well (SI; SR & JR). To clarify, I narrated, “A female lecturer and a male student walked in the opposite direction on the veranda - south and north. A male student walking from the north gave a long serious stare at the female lecturer who walked from the south as they were approaching each other. When they met, the student asked the lecturer if she did not have a girl child who was of his age. The lecturer said she had. The student was then still but kept staring at the lecturer. The lecturer in turn asked why he was asking her. The student said that he was just asking”. I asked the students why the young man asked his lecturer such questions. Some students suggested that he just wanted to know. “But why?” I probed. “Maybe he wanted to know the girl”, another student suggested. “Why?” I insisted. “No, I think he fell in love with the madam”, another student finally said. The rest agreed with her conclusion. A student said that when I taught making inferences I gave the example of a boy who fell in love with a female lecturer and thus asked if she had a child of his age. But that the boy did not really mean the child, he meant that he wanted to fall in love with the madam and this helped to understand making inferences.

Providing students with inference questions went well (SI; SR; & OB). After students seemed to have understood what it takes to infer, I gave each of them a 12-page handout. We reviewed all the questions one-by-one. I instructed students to work in groups of three or four. The non-participant observer wrote that the questions were excellent inference-based questions involving a lot of how and why’s. A student said that she found the questions very challenging, as they really required her to read the text carefully and then analyse the text. “Before you answer the questions you should understand the text very well because the questions required you to go beyond what the author has written in the text”.

#### **4.4.2 What did not go well in the lesson?**

I did not provide students enough wait time (SI; SR; & OB). Free talk, granting students the freedom to respond to questions at will and make comments at random resulted in me feeling uneasy when there was silence after I had posed a question. I would thus demand an immediate answer. Alternatively, I would change my question and would seek the answers from the bright students (Black, et al., 2003). Sometimes I answered the questions myself. The non-participant observer noted, "Allow students time to figure out for themselves. i.e. to apply their own critical thinking skills".

The feedback discussions did not go well (SR; OB & JR). The feedback discussions for all the lessons took the form of me asking students what they had discovered. A student read aloud the answer to the class. I asked other students what they thought about the answer. A short discussion ensued. The problem was that most of those students who I called upon to read aloud their answers were the "think tank" (bright students). I did not bother to ask the quiet students because deep down in me, I feared that asking them for an answer, which I assumed they did not have, would have amounted to intruding into their privacy and exposing their weaknesses to the rest of the class (Hartman, 2000:140). In fact, I did not know how to deal with them. Consequently, they were neglected. The feedback process was as a result tedious. The non-participant observer wrote that the process of feedback was long and tedious. I noted, "Today I did not involve most of the students". Similarly, a student wrote, "The lecture (sic) did not look at all the students' knowledge of understanding".

#### **4.4.3 What would I improve if the lesson were to be repeated again?**

First, I would increase my wait time from 1 second to 3 seconds (Black, et al., 2003) to allow students to think about the question in order to provide a well thought out answer. I would first pose the question to all the students in the class without directing it to any student in particular and expect all students to react to the question. I would then direct the question to a specific student. All questions, correct or wrong would be used to develop both understanding and thinking. This arrangement would increase the number of participating students and extend their thinking abilities through the provision of immediate feedback.

To encourage the majority of the students to participate in the class activities I would tell them that I could only help them if I knew what or where the problem was. I would also tell them that as teachers to be, they should open up so that I can find an alternative modality to assist them, which in turn might help them assist their learners should they have such learners in their classes. I also intend to let them know that no one in the class can learn or understand on their behalf and that the reason for them being in the class is to be assisted to learn. However, most important, I would “assure them that if I call on them and they do not know the answer, they should just let me know”,(Burns, 2005:28).To address the question of tediousness, I would group students for the take up of answers. Then I would instruct them to compare their answers in their respective groups. The students would discuss and give reasons for their choices to the others amongst themselves. This arrangement would compel students to think critically about their answers. I would only pay attention to those answers that remained in dispute.

#### **4.5 Lesson 4 – adjectives of quality**

This lesson focused on another feature of fact and opinion - adjectives of quality.

##### **4.5.1 What went well in the lesson?**

The handouts were suitable (SI; SR; OB & JR). First, I informed students that they were to learn how adjectives create opinions and facts. Then I provided them with handouts with clear directions and which contained the definition, roles, and the types of adjectives. Thereafter we discussed the latter. Then I gave students exercises - six sentences in which to identify the adjectives and nouns. After students had finished, I instructed them to work in groups. Then, I instructed them to swop and mark one another’s work. A student wrote that the instructions for the activities were very clear and understandable. Another student wrote that the activity was enjoyable.

Helping students to understand how adjectives form fact and opinion went well (SR; OB & JR). When students seemed to have understood the definition and purpose of adjectives, I introduced

adjectives of quality. I used the sentence, I bought a *white* car (white observable – fact). Then we discussed adjectives that create opinions, I bought a *beautiful* white car (beautiful - opinion). I made them aware that both beautiful and white are adjectives of quality but *white* states fact whilst *beautiful* expresses an opinion. A student said, “the one [the lesson] I enjoyed very much was adjectives because from that point I realized how important adjectives in sentence are. If you say sentence without adjectives someone will not understand”.

Activating students’ schemata went well (SR; OB & JR). After students understood adjectives, I informed them that they were to design an ideal “Namibian Nation”. I instructed them to draw a two column and three-row chart like this one below.

**Table 10**

<b>Our dream</b>	<b>Editor’s dream</b>
<b>Differences</b>	<b>Similarities</b>
<b>The article is about:</b>	

I instructed them to write the desired behaviours, the production level of workers and the merits for promotion and so on they thought all the Namibians needed to have and to understand in order to develop Namibia. A student wrote that they found it easy to compare the differences and similarities of the editor’s and their dreams.

Reading for literal understanding went well (SI; SR; OB & JR). After students had created their ideal Namibian nation, I gave them the “Political Perspective” (see appendix C6) and instructed them to read it individually. When the students had finished reading, I instructed them, in groups of three people, to re-read the text and sum up the editor’s “Namibian dream” in the right hand column of the chart. I also instructed them to write the differences between their dreams and those of the editor’s in the left hand side of the chart. They had to write the similarities in the right hand side of the chart and to summarize the editor’s dream at the bottom of their charts.

Re-writing the text factually went well (SR). After the above activity, we focused attention on re-writing the text factually. First, we identified adjectives and other features (written in italics below) of opinion. Secondly, we omitted them. Thirdly, we reconstructed the sentences. Example: *As a nation, we need to seriously* get back to the basics, *in almost every sense. We cannot*

*reach for the skies or attain our goals unless we've got good and solid foundations in virtually all areas of national life. The factual sentence read: back to the basics. We attain goals. We've got foundations in areas of national life.* Fourthly, I instructed students to continue on their own. A student wrote: “the topic was well explained and I have learned more on how to redress/strip a sentence from opinion to a factual one”. Another student wrote, “the lesson was very interesting because we learned how to strip words and how to rebuild them on our selves [sic]. It made us to think critically and how to give facts and opinions”.

#### **4.5.2 What did not go well in the lesson?**

Time was wasted on logistical arrangements (SI; SR; OB & JR). This lesson could not be taught at 11h40 as scheduled on the timetable because it was hot and students looked tired. A student proposed to have the class at 18h00 in the evening and all agreed to that. I then arranged with the caretaker to leave one classroom open. However, on my arrival, I found all classes locked. I had to go to his house to get the keys. That arrangement delayed the lesson and as a result, I did not have time to prepare the tape and camera. I had to set the camera up in the presence of the students. A student wrote that I delayed the lesson trying to fix the camera and radio. Another student wrote that the only thing that did not go well at the beginning of the lesson was looking for a class, which resulted in time wasting.

Timing for the activity was undermined (SI; SR; OB & JR). When I piloted the lessons, I noted the time the students took to complete each activity. However, in the case of this lesson, the students did not finish within the set time. A student wrote that they did not have much time to work on the activity and that it would have been better had they had enough time to work on the activities. Similarly, another student wrote that the only important thing that did not go well was time management.

I should not have shown my displeasure in a threatening manner (SI; SR & JR). At the end of the lesson that preceded this one, I gave students questions that required them to respond with an analytical reasoning as homework, (Sotto, 1994). This lesson was therefore set to discuss the answers to those questions. Some of the students did not do their homework at all and others did it half way. Since our first meeting for the lesson unit, I had encouraged students to adopt a new attitude – to work hard. Therefore, when it was apparent that students had not done their

homework, I was dismayed and reacted strongly. A student wrote that the only thing that did not go well was that part of being angry while talking to them because that has the potential to cause them to learn with fear. Another wrote, “the teacher should not be angry because this will lead the student not to attend the class”.

Rewriting text into factual text needed more time and examples (SR & JR). A student wrote, “the teacher should spend more time on explain what are the adjectives [sic] and how to undress sentences”. Another student wrote, “improve by giving more clue [sic] on more different words in the text that turn sentences into opinions ones”.

#### **4.5.3 What needed to be improved if the lesson were to be repeated in the future?**

First, if the lesson had to be taught in the afternoon, I would ask the caretaker to give me the key to a particular classroom. I would test the video and audio recorder before I left for lunch. I would also notify the students about the venue in advance. That arrangement might help us to work within the planned time.

In addition, I would first further shorten the lesson for the day (SR & JR). I would spread the lesson over a longer period. As per my experience, it was almost impossible to have a period in which all students could finish the activities in good time. Therefore, this arrangement might reduce pressure on students. A student wrote, “follow time allocation to each period properly to avoid bored. Too much work which also contribute otherwise the lesson was very good”.

With regard to homework problems, students would be required to hand in their work upon their arrival in the class. If it was discovered that a student had not put sufficient effort into the task, I would give them a warning and should that continue, such a student would be referred to disciplinary committee of which the rector is the chairperson. In addition, no student would be allowed to attend a class if she/he had an outstanding assignment and if a student chose not to attend a class that student should have a valid reason before being accepted back into the next class. Such arrangements might cause students to work harder. It might also minimize conflict.

#### **4.6 LESSON 5 – emotive language**

For this lesson, we focused attention on emotive or persuasive language.

#### **4.6.1 What went well in the lesson?**

First, recapitulating the previous lessons went well (SR & JR). A student wrote, “the lesson was introduced well whereby you asked your students to recapitulate, thats [sic] good because it shows you where the students and your lessons rendered stands”. Another student wrote: “The presentation itself was good.... It was also introduced by reflecting on the previous lesson which was interesting, because it linked with what we did today”.

I made students aware that they were to learn about emotive language, which writers often use. Then I gave them handouts providing a definition of emotive language. We discussed the definition. Then I gave them an exercise – “choose the most exciting headlines”. We discussed the choices they had made. I gave students thesauruses and showed them how a thesaurus works. I once again gave them another exercise similar to the first one but more advanced. I instructed them to, with a partner, use the thesaurus to replace the emotive words, which were bolded. A student said that she learnt that emotive language is the use of strong words. She claimed that she was never aware of the use of emotive language even though she always read newspapers. “Now I can even write (sic) a newspaper using emotive language so it helped me a lot”.

Doing a contrastive study of newspaper reports went well (SI; SR; OB & JR). After students had finished with the exercises, I gave them two newspaper articles from two different newspapers that reported the same incident (see appendix C 7). I showed them where each report started and ended. Then I instructed them to read each report individually and in groups discuss how Gattling (a character in the report) and the demonstrators were written about in each report. I also told them to decide which report was dramatic. A student wrote, “I understood the usage of emotive in writing. Emotive language as a lesson made me understand on the language used in the newspaper”.

Reading for literal understanding was successful (SI; SR; OB & JR). I told students to individually re-read the first report. I also instructed them to underline the topic sentences and to provide each paragraph with a heading in groups of three to four students. We then discussed the topic sentence and the heading of each paragraph. When students seemed to have understood the

literal information well, I gave them a 12-page handout as homework. I instructed them to review the questions in their groups. I instructed them to answer the questions in their groups.

In order to introduce students to a thesaurus, I introduced a thesaurus in book form to groups. Then I shifted and focused attention on finding a thesaurus in Microsoft Word 2003. I typed the word "riot". Then I placed the cursor on the word "riot" and I right clicked. The computer listed eight words such as uprising; insurrection etc. I selected the most appropriate word for the context. Students were excited to have learned something new and demanded more. I repeated the process.

#### **4.6.2 What did not go well in the lesson?**

Students needed sufficient resources. This lesson required the use of thesauruses and dictionaries of synonyms. However, the library had only five thesauruses and one Merriam Webster's dictionary of synonyms. I arranged students into groups of four students each. I instructed them to work in pairs. The pairs had to take turns in using the thesaurus. The problem is that the students could not complete the task on time. A student wrote, "The material [sic] was not enough for each group/pair so that they can all have something to use". Another student wrote, "The only thing is the teaching materials were not enough for the pairs, some pair was doing the activity without dictionary".

Articles should have been printed on two separate pages. To do an effective contrastive study of the two reports I thought that it was better to have the stories on the same page – on the left and right hand side. Some students did not know where exactly the first report started and ended and that was the case with the second report. A student wrote, "The passages were not arranged well, in such a way that they were mixed on one paper this caused a bit of confusion to the co-researchers" [students]. Another student wrote, "The way the handout was photocopied were mixed that confused the students".

### **4.6.3 What would I improve if the lesson were to be repeated?**

First, to learn to use a thesaurus using computer software does not take time. So next time I would arrange to have the class in the computer laboratory so that students could have access to the thesaurus at once. A student wrote, "... In the future just come with more books enough for all students to finish or work quickly on the activity". In addition, I noted "This is an interesting lesson spoiled by shortages of thesaurus I should have had this lesson in the computer laboratory".

## **4.7 Lesson 6**

This section presents an analysis of the last summative assessment that was designed in light of the research goals. Some of the questions in the last summative assessment are also found in the diagnostic assessment activity. Questions in the diagnostic assessment activity were accompanied by an explanation of what each question demanded from students. In the case of this last summative assessment, questions are also accompanied by an explanation of what the question required. However, to avoid repetition, where a question is found in both assessments, the explanation is not repeated in the last summative assessment activity. Both assessments are attached as appendices.

### **4.7.1 A. Factual questions:**

Question 1: Kind of publication: 61% (19 students) knew that it was a newspaper article, 32% (10 students) did not know and 3% (1 student) left the space blank.

Question 2: Type of writing: 67% (21 students) did not answer the question correctly. 29% (9 students) answered the question correctly.

Question 13: Example of facts stated: 7% (students) did not answer the question, 13% (4 students) provided wrong answers and 80% (15 students) gave correct answers.

### **4.7.2 B Inferences**

Question 3: Audience of the author: 32% (10 students) provided wrong answers, 64% (20 students) answered the question correctly. All students inferred based on explicitly stated

information. Some of the answers were “to the economist and concerned readers”, “to the president and concerned citizens”.

Question 4: Proof of the above: 16% (4 students) did not answer the question, 26% (15 students) provided wrong answers and 55% (11 students) gave correct answers. For example: “Indeed I will continue to hold ministers accountable to the performance of those they delegate” and “speedy result from the ministers”.

Question 5: Motive for writing: 0% (0 students) provided wrong answers. 100% (30 students) gave the correct answers. Some wrote, “is the empty promises [sic] that the leaders are making to the public”, “he is a member of the opposition party or because of money”, “because the living standard of the Namibian people is not up to standard”.

Question 6: Evidence of the above: 41% (13 students) provided wrong quotes, 54% (17 students) answered the question correctly. For example, the president has made a number of promises, which we hope are not just short-term politicking”, “urge the president regardless of party political ...”

Question 7: The main question the author is attempting to answer: 16% (5 students) gave wrong answers. For example, “...why is Namibia failing to develop?” 80% (25 students) provided correct answers, such as, “will the food and fuel decrease?”

Question 8: The main assumption underlying the author’s thinking: 41% (13 students) provided incorrect answers and 54% (17 students) answered the question correctly. Examples, “the vision and objectives will not be achieved [unless] changes our ways of handling matter specially those in power minister, deputy minister ...”

Question 16: The conclusion the author reached: 48% (15 students) provided wrong answers. For example, “she is hoping from president to see government to take action very soon”, 48% (15 students) gave the right answers. Such as, “some improvement will be in place”, “No action taken ...”

#### **4.7.3 B 4. Analyzing**

Question 14: how the writer views the president: 22% (7 students) gave wrong answers. For example, “She see [sic] him as a person who cares his nation”, 74% (23 students) gave the correct answers such as, “Slack and foolish by making promises that he cannot keep ...”, “as a person who don’t care about his citizens, selfish man and foolish”

Question 15: Evidence for the above answer: 35% (11 students) quoted wrongly and 61% (19 students) gave the correct quotes. Example, “The president must choose his cabinet with care”.

Question 17: How she reached the conclusion: 29% (9 students) failed to answer the question correctly. Example, “Namibia must feel more relief and encouraged and hope to see government take action very soon” while 67% (21 students) provided the correct answers. They quoted, “the president made similar statement before but nothing happened”.

Question 20: How the writer feels about the issue: 35% (11 students) provided wrong answers and 61% (19 students) answered the question correctly. Students reacted to this with a monosyllabic answer: “Heartening”, “Angry”.

Question 21: Quote supporting sentence: 35% (11 students) quoted wrongly and 61% (19 students) quoted the writer correctly such as, “all of us must be held accountable”.

Question 22: Sentence/s that pleased and made the students (readers) feel guilty, angry/annoyed and saddened. 16% (5 students) did not indicate their feelings and 81% (25 students) indicated their feelings such as “annoyed”, “pleased” etc.

Question 23: Quotation for evidence: 35% (11 students) quoted wrongly and 61% (19 students) quoted correctly. For example, “at present only maize is VAT exempt, while the prices of other essentials and cooking oil have sky rocketed”, “short-term programs should be in place to provide and sanitation, securing of ....”

Question 24: Did the author intend the effect? 48% (15 students) could not tell if the effect was deliberately created. They responded with a “no” and gave wrong examples whereas 48% (15 students) knew that the effect was crafted by the writer. They wrote “yes” and provided correct examples.

Question 25: How did he create that effect? 67% (21 students) did not know how the writer created that effect. A student wrote, “He did not care about telling the whole truth, weaknesses and strengths of them” and 29% (9 students) knew how the writer created the effects. For example, “The language usage (emotive language) ...”

Question 26: Bias in writing: 29 % (9 students) answered the question wrongly but 67% (21 students) indicated both “for” and “against”.

Question 28: Writing techniques – how the writer makes clear what he means. 71% (22 students) did not know how the writer makes clear what he means. Example, “He just left the reader to guess”. 26% (8 students) knew how the writer made clear what he meant. For example, “by proving examples to clarify [clarify] her arguments”.

#### 4.7.4 B 5. Evaluating

Question 9: Cause and effect: “If the thinking is taken seriously what will happen?”

29 % (9 students) did not answer the question correctly and 67% (21 students) provided the correct answers. For example, “A lot will be changed and some ministers will even lose their jobs or positions” and “VAT will be exempted on essential food”.

Question 10: Cause and effect: “If we fail to take this line of thinking seriously ...?” 77% (24 students) answered the question correctly. For example, “Poverty will continue”, 19 % (6 students) did not answer the question correctly.

Question 11: What the author wants his readers to believe: 25 % (8 students) did not answer the question correctly and 71% (22 students) answered the question correctly. For example, “That something can still be done to change the situation if all agree to do so”.

Question 12: Evidence for the above answer: 32 % (10 students) gave wrong answers, 64% (20 students) answered the question correctly. For example, “The president has made similar statements before and yet words are seldom turned into action”.

Question 18: “Did the argument change the way the readers see Namibia”? Both “yes” and “no” were accepted as the correct answers. 100% (30 students) answered the question.

Question 19: How did the argument change the reader? 97% (21 students) answered the question correctly. For example, “I can only understand her assumptions but that does not change the way I see Namibia” and (9 students) did not indicate their feelings.

Question 27: Example of cause and effect: 42 % (13 students) gave the wrong answer. For example, “the president needs to ensure that merits starts playing a role”. 54 % (17 students) gave the correct examples. Such as, “Upping local food production reduces dependence on imports”.

**Table 11**

<b>A. Factual: quest 3</b>			
<b>Questions</b>	<b>→</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Correct	→	19	9
Incorrect answer	→	11	21
No answer	→		

Total number of candidates	30	30
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- 63% could recall the kind of publication they were dealing with
- 36% could recall the type of writing they were dealing with

**Table 12**

<b>B. Inferring: Total questions: 7</b>							
<b>Questions →</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>
Correct →	20	11	30	17	25	17	15
Incorrect →	10	19	0	13	5	13	15
No answer →							
Total No. students	30	30	30	30	30	30	30

- 67% could specify who the author had in mind
- 37% could quote correctly while 64% could not
- 100% could infer the motive for writing
- 57% could support the answers with contextual evidence
- 83% correctly inferred the main question the author was answering
- 57% could unearth assumptions underlying the author's thinking
- 50% understood the conclusion

**Table 13**

<b>C. Analysing: Total questions 11</b>											
<b>Questions →</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>
Correct →	23	19	21	19	19	25	19	15	9	21	8
Incorrect →	7	11	9	11	11	5	11	15	21	9	22
Total students →	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30

- 73% correctly pointed out how the writer viewed the president
- 63% supported their claims with the correct textual evidence for the above
- 70% analysed the language and pointed out how the author reached a conclusion
- 63% could analyse words and knew how the writer felt about the issues
- 63% supported their claims with the correct textual evidence for the above
- 83% expressed that there was a section that made them: angry; sad etc.
- 63% provided correct textual evidence for the above.
- 50% knew that the author created the effects.
- 30% knew how the author created the effects.
- 70% knew that the writer used both facts and opinion in one article.
- 27% knew how the writer made clear what she meant

**Table 14**

<b>D. Evaluating: Total questions: 7</b>								
<b>Questions</b>	<b>→</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
Correct	→	21	24	22	20	17	30	21
Incorrect	→	9	6	8	10	13	0	9
No answer	→							
Total number of students		30	30	30	30	30	30	30

- 70% - 80% correctly identified the cause and effect
- 80% evaluated and related messages to their own lives and inferred what the author wanted them to believe
- 66% could provide textual evidence for the above
- 100% evaluated and related messages to their own lives and decided to not/change their view about Namibia
- 70% explained how it changed their views about Namibia

## 4.8 Conclusion

These figures suggest that even though readers do not become critical readers overnight, in this case, after students had done different exercises repeatedly with different texts; had opportunities to practice strategies under supervision; received instant feedback and diagnosis; and received explanations and scaffolding when they were at a loss - they clearly started to make progress in a short time. A student wrote "Before we started with the lesson, I was not able to identify which one is an adjective, which one is a noun but now I am able to differentiate that this one is an adjective and this one is not an adjective and the different type of adjectives!" Another student said, "The texts is very challenging it allowed students to think critical therefore we are progressing much more special if you could start with us last year or even at the beginning of the year". Another student said: "I learned a lot of things like emotive language things that I didn't know before. At least as we worked through with one another in a class I tried to get to some of the difficult context, so it was, it was a very good research actually!" The diagnostic assessment activity, analysed above, and the formative assessments I used throughout the project clearly confirm this claim. Thus, I conclude that the way I taught critical reading helped students to begin to read critically, more analytically and circumspectly.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The goals of this research were to find effective ways of teaching critical reading, to explore materials for that purpose and to heighten my self-awareness. This final chapter of the thesis discusses effective ways of teaching critical reading in my context; the effect the lessons had on my students; lessons learned; the development of my self-awareness; the next cycle of action research; and suggestions for further research.

#### **5.1 Effective ways of teaching critical reading**

Overall, this research project has achieved its goals since I have found some effective ways of teaching critical reading and have gained some knowledge about critical reading materials. I have also started to develop a more reflective attitude to my teaching.

##### **5.1.1 Reviewing lesson objectives**

Marzano (in Chappuis, 2005:40) writes, “Students who can identify what they are learning significantly outscore those who cannot”. Black, et al. (2003:49) claim, “It is difficult for students to achieve a learning goal unless the students understand that goal”. In my action research project, I found that learning targets do provide students with opportunities to look back and see progress. For example, when we reviewed the learning targets, students doubted if we could achieve the goals we were setting for ourselves. However, as the lesson progressed they began to develop an attitude of reflective scepticism towards reading. “Now, in this lesson (1) we at first thought it was too much but then...” I found that goal setting stimulated students to take a keen interest in the lesson. We “explored”, “investigated”, “enquired”, “analysed”, “synthesised”, “evaluated” the text (Namibia. MoE, 2010). At the end of the lesson, a student reported, “...we realized that *we reached the objectives -we have defined the facts and opinion* (emphasis mine). It was really helpful [and] enjoyable - we really learned a lot...!”

Learning targets assisted me to keep track of what I was doing and to have reasons for all my actions in the lesson. A proper learning target such as “...you should be able to form an opinion” should enable the teacher to know why he is doing what he is doing and to reflect on those actions. That learning target, for example, was the reason why I instructed students to (a) read an assigned text (b) react to what they read by choosing to go to either, “I dis/agree” and “I take no stand”. It also gave me grounds to do it at the time when students had the basic knowledge from prior discussions. Nothing was done without a motive or left to chance. Reasons enabled me to know where I was in the lesson and to assess students’ progress; how the activities were helping students to learn *in the course of the lesson* (emphasis mine). The learning targets therefore served as a benchmark upon which I based my reflections to assess my instructional methods and to begin to shift my thinking in the act of teaching from a spontaneous, intuitive mode into a more critical, reflective mode, (Hartman, 2000:140).

Furthermore, stating learning targets with demonstrative words offered me and my students a clear picture about what I hoped to do and what the students would learn during the lesson. The learning target “...you should be able to infer”, for example, encouraged me to write, “I AM WAITING” when students were busy, as stated in chapter 4. I was clear that students would infer the meaning of “I AM WAITING” and they did. Demonstrative words directed my attention to what the students had to do in the course of the lesson and to what students had to achieve - the end product of the lesson. We all knew where we were heading, at what point we had reached there and whether the targets had been achieved or not.

### **5.1.2 Asking a range of questions**

Naylor, Keogh and Goldsworthy (2005:124) assert that “unusual questions which pose problems that the learners haven’t thought about before are especially useful”. Sotto (1994:23) writes that turning that which is to be learned into a problem is one of the effective ways of teaching in general. In the case of this study, I designed inference questions, which challenged students. A student defined challenging: “...you forget and relax, so when you go back to it (questions) you will find it difficult to do it” (sic). What went well in my action research project was that the students figured out the author’s thinking process in groups and examined the language and ideas in the text (Carr, 1990; Kurland n.d., Cervetti, et al., 2001; Namibia. MoE, 2008; Santman, 2005; Wilson, 2003). Questions promoted independent learning. They freed me from reading on

behalf of the students and from forcing students to accept my interpretation as the only correct one.

Questions can cause students to be inquisitive of their own knowledge. Manyai (2006: 131) asserts, "Penetrating questions require further explanations or the defence of answers already given". I also used questions during the lesson to probe students' understanding. For example, while discussing how to differentiate facts from opinions, I asked students if what they believed would be considered factual or not. What went well is that the question made its way into students' inner world; caused discomfort and they began to become sceptical of their own knowledge. Deep reflections vis-à-vis facts and opinion aroused "some of the things we thought were facts were in fact opinions", a student said. As a class, we went beyond common sense experiences and understanding (Namibia. MEC, 2002). We reasoned, "If the limits of reason prevent us from proving God's existence, they also prevent us from disproving it as well", (Lawhead, 2003:124).

### **5.1.3 Encouraging students to take a position**

At a certain stage in lesson 2, I asked students to individually and silently re-read the text. Then I instructed them to decide to "agree", "disagree" with the writer or to "take no stand" in relation to what they read. I also asked them not to share their ideas with anyone. There was dead silence when students started to read. The students really engaged with the text thoroughly and introspectively, reasoning independently in the act of reading. They were evaluating the validity and credibility of arguments in the text; relating the messages to their own experiences; assessing the logic of the arguments and finally either dis/agreeing or taking no stand. I found this particular method the most effective practical way of helping students to learn to "weigh up alternatives", "analyse", "synthesise" (Namibia. MoE, 2010:11). They also practised forming opinions culminating in a better understanding of the concepts of facts and opinions. It was "excellent - learner-centred and an application of critical thinking", wrote the non-participant observer.

#### **5.1.4 Asking students to summarize a text**

Summarizing can help students to discover the text structure. In the case of this study, students summarized and saw how ideas were arranged. Summarizing helped students to discover how the writer arranged the ideas; that texts are human constructs not God made, (Janks, 2003; Thoman & Jolls, 2005); that each paragraph has one main idea; that ideas are logically arranged from beginning to their logical end; and hence to understand the way texts construct realities. As one student put it, "...it gave me an idea on how this writer structured text".

#### **5.1.5 The value of re-reading**

Re-reading text introspectively provides students with an opportunity to begin to develop as active meaning-makers. Critical reading is demanding. It requires students to draw upon both bottom-up (building up meaning by reading word for word, letter for letter) and top-down (obtaining a global meaning of a text through clues) information processing before they eventually settle upon an interpretation of a text, (Berardo, 2006). This suggests the use of sources of information, sensory, syntactic (the way words and phrases are put together to form sentences in a language), semantic (the meaning of words, phrases), and pragmatic information (a schema) which interact in many complex ways to construct meaning during the reading process, (Rumelhart, 1985, cited in Verdugo, n.d.). I found that re-reading is a strategy that a critical reading teacher must teach his students. As one student put it, "If you don't understand something in the text or in the sentence, you just read it either twice or three times and in that way you might get something".

#### **5.1.6 Using group work**

Group work can free students from superiority and inferiority complexes that can occur when a teacher lectures them. I have based my assertion on my experiences as a student and my own observations as a teacher. In cases where the teacher individually asks students questions, there will naturally be students who will answer the questions correctly. Inversely there will always be students who will not know the answers. Students who give a wrong answer tend to lose trust and confidence in themselves, while those who provide the correct answer could have the tendency to feel more confident.

However, group work presents a different scenario. In lesson 3 for example, I grouped students, gave them a text and instructed them to read. After reading, I instructed them to re-read the text in order to provide each paragraph with a heading. In their respective groups, students of both genders read, discussed and negotiated meanings on an equal footing. They pooled their insights thereby generating new insights from different perspectives, (Graves, et. al., 2007:250). They concentrated introspectively; accepted and appreciated one another's intellect rather than elevating themselves above others. One student said, "like in our group, Katrina is good in English now poor me I could not really understand the words, the English ...". In fact, group work gave students an opportunity for "learning to know"; "learning to do"; "learning to live together" and "learning to be", (Crebbin, et al., 2008:30).

### **5.1.7 Drawing examples from real life situations**

Schema theory suggests that since humans start to think from the known to the unknown, drawing examples from familiar, real life situations in order to explain unfamiliar concepts is helpful. When students could not complete inference activities successfully, I was challenged to find a way to help them understand inferences. Therefore, I gave them a practical example – a student who fell in love with his lecturer. The practical example enabled students to begin to interpret their life experience. One student said, "Now in this case I want to give a practical example here, there is this other person who comes to my room asking for bread. However, sometimes he will not say can I come to have bread, he will just say, can I come and ask you something. Now at first, I did not know what is it all about and when you taught it, it [opened my eyes] was really a new lesson". This goes further to suggest that a real life example can assist students to make learning experience part of their mental structure.

## **5.2 The effect of the lesson unit**

### **5.2.1 Critical reading lessons had an effect on the students' lives**

As shown in chapter 4, the lessons had begun to affect the students' lives. To illustrate my point, a student said, "but linking the example you gave and the presentation that you gave and what is happening in real life situation, I can see that this lesson was really a good lesson and I will never forget it in my life". In other words, through these lessons, students learned to go beyond the

face value of the words; another student said, “The lessons really helped me a lot - something that will still help me in the future” (see appendix F 1). Before the lesson unit was implemented, students were not used to going beyond the literally stated information; as one student put it, “Without me going beyond what that person actually mean” (see appendix F 3).

Students begin to acquire an analytical habit of thinking and reading, (Shor, cited in Simpson, 1996:118). For example, upon reading, “I AM WAITING”, the student picked up his paper and walked toward me. I asked the student why he wanted to hand in his work. The student replaced the literal words “I AM WAITING” because the real meaning was different qualitatively from the literal meaning, (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). This question required students to do some serious thinking and propelled them to see the link between their actions and what was written on the board. The students detected an underlying message. In fact, it helped students to understand making inferences.

### **5.2.2 Critical reading lessons deepened students’ knowledge of the topics covered**

Understanding is the goal for teaching. The participating students, as stated earlier, were training to become teachers who would teach both their Mother tongue and English Second Language. Adjectives were not new to these students; they have had several lessons on adjectives at different times at the college and prior to joining college in both English and Mother tongue. I even observed some of these students teaching adjectives during their teaching practice or school based studies when they were in year two. However, after we discussed the definitions and types of adjectives, and did activities in context such as reading and identifying adjectives in a reading text, considering how adjectives can change perceptions, support facts or form opinions or the way we see people, students developed a deeper understanding of adjectives. Many students claimed to have learned adjectives for the first time. A student said: “...eeh at first before, before this lesson I did not know about adjectives. The first time to learn about adjectives was in this lesson”.

## **5.3 Aspects of the lessons that were problematic**

### **5.3.1 Feedback discussion was tedious**

There were activities to help students understand texts literally. After I had established that students had grasped the literal meaning of a text well, I provided them with inference questions, which were aimed at encouraging students to develop a more thoughtful interpretation of a text, as homework. Then we discussed the answers to the inference questions. The discussions took the form of analyzing the answers, clarifying the answers or any misunderstandings, providing (textual) evidence, contextualizing, elaborating, evaluating, justifying, rejecting, negotiating and extending the answers. What was wrong is that the discussion took too long and mainly involved a few students and me.

### **5.3.2 Stating too many learning goals can intimidate students**

Prior to the actual teaching, I provided students with a list of learning targets, which I wrote in student friendly language. For example, “in the course of this lesson you should be able to read critically and thoughtfully”. As stated earlier on, I read them aloud one-by-one, I explained when and where necessary, told students explicitly that they were our target and urged them to ask questions for clarity. Students understood what they meant. The lesson then started. What was wrong was that the number of learning targets intimidated students. Lesson 1, for example, consisted of six learning targets. I learned that stating and reviewing many learning targets intimidates students as a student revealed, “Now, in this lesson we at first thought it was too much ...”

### **5.3.3 Pacing**

Other researchers such as Mbelani (2007) and Wells (2010) have found that the pace of a lesson may be affected by two factors, lack of sufficient background knowledge in a specific subject and socio-economic factors – they found that learners from low-income schools tend to be slower in English literacy lessons than learners from middle-income schools. In the case of this study, the pace of the lesson slowed down towards the end. This can be attributed to too many activities. Lesson 2 for example consisted of eleven steps; first, I provided students with learning targets;

read them aloud and explained whatever students did not understand. Then I provided students with a list of pertinent words and phrases and we discussed them. Students then worked in pairs to categorize the phrases according to their functions. We then discussed the category of the phrases. By the time we discussed metacognition, students were becoming very restless, fidgeting in their seats and talking amongst themselves and their interest started falling. When we reached the targeted end of the lesson, the students were exhausted. I have learned that student get bored if there are too many activities.

### **5.3.4 Class attendance**

Unlike traditional teaching in which learners can memorize the content and reproduce it when required in tests, critical reading, which emphasizes understanding, requires the student to be physically present in class. As stated earlier, to emerge with a better understanding, critical reading lessons take the form of both the teacher and students, explaining and clarifying. Besides the critical reading lesson procedures build on one another. If a student skips a lesson, the discussion following that lesson will not be as meaningful. The tests and the formative assessment revealed that students who skipped a class could not, for example, answer questions such as, “Are there sections that make you feel pleased? Guilty? Angry? Annoyed? Saddened?” “Did the author intend the effect?” One student remarked, “You might not catch up when you have not done with your homework. And sometimes you forget and relax, so when you go back to it you will find it difficult”.

### **5.4 Lessons I learned from carrying out the action research**

This section discusses the development of my self-awareness as an educator, and focuses on my increasing awareness of the nature of critical reading, its pedagogy and how it relates to my personal attributes.

#### **5.4.1 Meticulous planning of lessons**

Effective ways of teaching critical reading are not regurgitated methods (rehearsed methods); they derive from classroom study/research. I have learned that teaching critical reading demands a great deal of thinking and planning. Even though it is impossible to predict or fully control what will eventually happen in the classroom, the reading teacher must plan thoroughly;

organize carefully; interact with students thoughtfully and have a clear idea of how the lesson is going to proceed. In order for critical reading to yield the desired results the teacher needs to plan what he/she hopes to achieve well in advance. In the case of this study, I visualized the organization of my notes on the board and the spots where I posted “I agree”, “I disagree” and “I take no stand” labels in the class well in advance - I left nothing to chance. The detailed planning and preparation ensured a successful critical reading lesson.

Thorough planning encourages a teacher to be task oriented. When I implemented my planned lessons, I was encouraged to focus particularly on helping students to attain the stated knowledge and on finishing what I had planned but nothing else. One activity neatly built on another until its logical end. I found that a meticulously planned lesson encourages teachers to be serious with their work, to dictate the direction of the lesson and facilitate classroom interaction.

Students appreciate a well-planned lesson. When students see the seriousness of the teacher and the reason for learning they are encouraged to reflect and they begin to take their work more seriously – “even the lazy students start to take their work more seriously”, said a student. Another one said that the research in which he participated really made him who he was at the time of the interview.

Before I undertook this research project, I had taught students “critical reading”. The process of preparing was simple and short. I never took time to think hard and to select ideas let alone the effective ways that could encourage students to read critically. In addition, before undertaking this study, I had never designed a lesson unit that lasted for two months or eight weeks. All I knew was how to prepare a one-day lesson.

#### **5.4.2 Experience alone is not enough**

At the time when I undertook this research, I had ten years experience in teaching English Second Language to student teachers. Clearly, ten years is a long period for one to develop through practice. However, my teaching of reading, as stated earlier, took the form of students taking turns to read a paragraph or a few lines, similar to the way I experienced reading when I was a learner myself. I did not notice that I was promoting passive learning or rote learning. That approach was widespread and I lacked reflective practice knowledge. It seems that it is difficult

to reflect and substantially know what is wrong with the practice without first being exposed to theories that are based on evidence and give one the necessary tools for reflection. When I undertook this research, I discovered that my ten years' experience had not helped me to develop fully.

#### **5.4.3 Both the students and lecturer have to be open minded**

In a critical reading class, both the teacher and students develop a richer understanding of the text they are reading. Similarly, they are both required to ponder over the issues raised and deliberate the reasoning behind the answers, and to re-consider their answers on the spot. Besides, the teacher is encouraged to re-consider his earlier considerations or answers "as the students express their own" (Freire, 1993: unpagged). However, it appeared that the students participating in my research were used to a hierarchical relationship between the lecturer and themselves and to a system where a teacher is the one who provides the correct answers and they should therefore not think in the students' presence. I conclude that the teacher must tell students explicitly that there is more than one correct answer to one question and that their opinion/answers are of the same value as that of the teacher. It is not enough to merely accept more than one answer for students to realize this.

#### **5.4.4 The use of well-structured, interesting activities**

Activities must be of interest but also carefully structured. That is, in order for the activities to achieve the set learning targets and to construct knowledge, the instructions must be very clear and focused. If the instructions are very clear, students can grapple to construct understanding from the material presented to them independently. Where and when it is necessary to teach grammar rules, the rules must be taught in an integrated fashion in order for students to know and to use the grammatical rules effectively and appropriately. Notes must be pooled from different sources and they must be interpreted and evaluated several times over a period of time.

## **5.5 The development of self-awareness**

### **5.5.1 Increasing self-awareness**

Before I undertook this research, I held a belief that students' spoken English improved because of an interactive dialogue between students and students; and students and teacher. That philosophy permeated my classroom conduct. Granting students more freedom to respond to questions at will and make comments at random often culminated in a noisy classroom. I did not grant students opportunities to deliberately think about and answer questions. I viewed such noise as a sign of learning and I was not aware of the fact that the fear of silence underlies that philosophy. Through reflections on the comments of the non-participant observer who noted that noise brought this urgently to my attention (See appendix), and I reluctantly became aware of my shortcomings, (Schmuck, 2006). The non-participant observer's comment helped me to see my actions from an unfamiliar perspective. Therefore, I have begun to challenge myself and to alter both my traditional way of conducting classroom affairs and my epistemology about English Second Language. My classroom conduct is now developing toward being more consistent with professional classroom practices. The research has helped me to increase my self-awareness as a teacher and learner.

### **5.5.2 Development of my pedagogic knowledge about critical reading**

Prior to undertaking this research project, I did not substantially understand the value of group work. In fact, I undervalued group work and thus grouped students in a meaningless way. That is, students were not grouped with a specific plan in mind, for example, mixing the weak and strong students to benefit the weak ones. In other words, grouping was without justification. However, after I thought hard and read some relevant literature about promoting independent learning I started to understand the value of group work. I mixed the weak and the strong ones in one group. The decision to group students was based on informed judgment.

I knew very little about teaching and learning critical reading prior to undertaking this research. Therefore, I could not effectively teach students to read a text critically. To illustrate the point, during 2007, I decided to teach my students to read critically. I gave them "Modest Proposal". I first read a few lines aloud and asked a student in the front seat to continue to read aloud the

paragraph I started. The second student read the next paragraph and so it went on until the end of the text. I then asked students to tell me what they thought the text was about. The text presented two problems (a) the world it presented was strange (b) most words were new to students. We spent twenty minutes sorting out the linguistic difficulties – giving them the meaning of difficult words. I then unsuccessfully attempted to explain the text to my students. My students did not accept my interpretations; they rather changed the story to fit it into their preconceived notions of the world.

Now I have deepened my own insights around the nature of critical reading as articulated in chapter 2. I also understand what it requires to teach critical reading. To avoid repeating what I already stated there, I will only point out that primarily critical reading is critical thinking in reading; it takes a long time; it demands both the teacher and students to work hard and that students must attend classes if they are to make any progress.

### **5.5.3 Theory and practice**

Firstly, in this research theory preceded practice as the practice was informed by theory. Transactional theory underlies all the reading exercises. To illustrate the point, in all the lesson units students re-read paragraphs and then provided each with a title. As discussed earlier on, in such a reading event, the students and I actively and thoughtfully engaged each other. In the act of reading, a student or a reader asked the author or the text, “What are you really saying in this paragraph”? The text or the author then responded, “I am saying ...” The students then “interpreted” and arrived at the conclusion, which was a heading. Before undertaking this research project, I was not aware of any reading theory, which guides teaching reading.

Secondly, the research project has begun to propel me to formulate and implement my own theory. Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis offer descriptions, explanations and justifications of my actions, which together became my theory of practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005). In other words, the decisions vis-à-vis teaching of the lessons and approaches were informed by a developing theory. Now I have begun to develop into a “practice-based professional”. I have as a result started to take more control of my working life, to raise my voice within the Language Department and in the College where I work. For example, our third year student teachers do action research as part of their curriculum. However, many of these research projects do not

resemble action research; for example, one had the goal of “improving spelling mistakes”. During an action research review meeting, I was able to convince my colleagues to establish an action research committee whose members were only those with a masters’ degree. It is close to impossible to see through a research project of any size if one has never been exposed to the research process.

One of the most important effects of this research project is that I have gained some knowledge about how to begin to improve my practice. I now know that one of the many ways to improve practice is to undertake action research. I have learned that action research enables a researching teacher to find practical solutions to bottlenecks that emerge in practice and to modify the way of delivering content to enable students to learn well. This will enable me to be a participant in continuously changing education situations rather than a passive observer. Overall, this has been a positive experience.

## **5.6 Socially critical theory and traditional theory underpinned the study**

Pulling threads together, this study engaged both socially critical theory and traditional theory, which underpinned the lessons and the whole study. To illustrate what I am saying and to avoid repeating information in chapter 2, I cite a few examples. Students interpreted all the text they read from their social, economic, political and cultural context. The adjective and emotive language lessons and the reading materials such as newspapers, helped them realize that texts are not neutral, or context-free but rather a design of the author in which social events are interpreted (Luke, cited in Serafini, 2003). These are clearly aspects of a socially critical theory of teaching critical reading.

As students sought to recognize an author’s purpose for writing; to distinguish opinion from fact; to make inferences; and to figure out the author’s thinking process and to detect propaganda devices; examine the language and ideas in the text, they read closely, (Carr, 1990; Kurland, n.d.; Cervetti, et al.,2001; Namibia. MoE, 2008; Santman, 2005; Wilson, 2003). A combination of the two theories culminates in meeting the aims of the Namibian curriculum.

## **5.7 Selection of appropriate texts**

I conclude that the assigned texts can be considered appropriate for critical reading if all the information in such texts is not explicitly stated requiring effort on the part of the students to make inferences. The texts must be enjoyable every step of the way and at the same time encourage a reflective approach to reading. The critical reading materials criteria as stated above take into account both the educational reform of Namibia, which has a strong emphasis on learner-centred education, and the needs of the students with regard to their lives both in and outside of the classroom.

## **5.8 Planning the second cycle**

Planning the second cycle of action research entails considering and including findings from the first cycle. These involve the need to address time allocation and pacing, not putting too much into a lesson, planning my time well, estimating correctly how much time each activity will take and grouping the students in a meaningful way.

### **5.8.1 Careful approach to students**

This study, as indicated earlier on, informed me that students view a teacher as a dispenser of knowledge - someone who has the correct answers all the time and the students' duties are to sit and wait to be provided with the correct answers. Therefore, in the next cycle, I will make considered efforts to first deal with the students' understanding of the role of a teacher. Teaching critical reading really entails developing thinking through reading. Therefore, even though it is fair to expect a teacher to have some correct answers, it is not wrong for the teacher to think (even aloud) in the presence of the students. Furthermore, I will let the students know that I am open to accepting their interpretations, as long as they are well substantiated or have conveyed the message. In addition, that my interpretation is not the only correct view but rather one of the ranges of possible knowledge (Thoman & Jolls, 2005) that I was trying to give them the skills to determine what they think the message or answer might be. I would model thinking by thinking aloud in the presence of learners and explain that the hierarchical relations should not be crystallized.

### **5.8.2 Provision of resources**

Since the Ministry of Education funds the college students, I would encourage the Department of Languages, which is a division of teaching English Second Language, to make it compulsory for students to buy a thesaurus especially those majoring in the teaching of English.

### **5.9 Research limitations**

The study was about prodding me to change and become a better-equipped professional teacher educator and about my students' learning outcomes rather than about "obtaining generalisable scientific knowledge" (Nunan, cited in Richards & Nunan, 1994 63). Thus, the reflections and evaluations and the findings, might not be generalized beyond the people, time, and context of the research.

### **5.10 Recommendations for further research**

Emanating from this small-scale action research project are several other questions that could be formulated by other researchers as research questions:

1. To what extent can critical reading experience influence writing?
2. Does the critical deconstruction of well-written texts enhance students' ability to produce similar texts?
3. What are effective ways of teaching succinct writing?

### **5.11 Conclusion**

There are many effective ways for teaching critical reading lessons some of which I did not explore. However, I found that for critical reading lessons to succeed teachers should follow some important steps. These include, plan the lesson rigorously so that they proceed logically and give students personal support: directing and giving guidelines before, during, and after reading. I recommend that teachers use instructional strategies that promote reflective reading, re-read the article several times and give students considered practical examples. They also need to challenge the students' critical reading/thinking, give students a purpose for reading and give feedback that causes students to think. The students should be organized in effective pairs/groups and be provided with wait time to reflect and respond to questions thoughtfully. Finally, the teacher must keep focus; coherence; negotiation; and frequent analysis and diagnosis.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: Letters

#### Appendix A 1: Letter to the rector

P.O. Box 27  
RUNDU  
13 March 2009

The Acting Rector

Dear Sir

#### **Request to carry out a research**

I request permission to conduct an action research in your college of education.

The research is for my Med in Education Theory and Practice – Literacy in curriculum with Rhodes University. The research intends to find meaningful ways of teaching college students critical reading. Critical reading and critical thinking are intrinsically part of the teaching/learning activities at the colleges of education in Namibia. Teacher educators at the colleges of education in Namibia are thus expected to help college students develop critical thinking and reading competencies and attitudes. The research is also prompted by the realization that as a teacher educator I am responsible for the continuing development of my students' reading competency. I have come to realize that I am in a position to improve my students' reading attainment which might cascade to their learners, as the participant in this research: group 2B-major in the teaching of English is expected to teach critical reading upon their completion.

The research will be based on a lesson unit that will run over +\_10 school days from the 17/03/2009 to 28/03/2009 with the year 2B class. I intend to ask some of my colleagues for permission to use their periods if the latter cannot materialize, I will arrange with the students to have the lessons in the evening from 18 hours to 21 hours. And also, the research will not present anything different from what the students are supposed to learn at their level, but it will be relevant to 3<sup>rd</sup> year as outlined both in the Broad Curriculum and English Communication skills Syllabus 1998.

An English advisory teacher has been invited as a non-participant observer who will provide positive feedback. The advisory teacher has been given briefed and will only come during those periods depending on their schedule.

The names of: the college, the students and the advisory teachers will not be revealed in the final document that will be published.

I hope my request will receive your favourable considerations.

Yours faithfully

Dikuwa Alexander (Mr)

## **Appendix A 2: Letter to the rector**

P.O. Box 27  
RUNDU  
13 Marc 2009

The Acting Rector

Dear Sir

### **Re: Request to conduct interview with students.**

I request permission to conduct interviews with focus groups of students (from your college) who took part in the presentation of the lesson unit on critical reading for my research with Rhodes University which I request permission to conduct it earlier this year.

These interviews will help to close gaps and validate the data that has been collected. These interviews will run on separate sessions for ten days during afternoon studies or free time and will not interfere with the smooth running of the college. Each session is expected to last between thirty and forty minutes. We will use tape and video recorder. The tape recorder will be used to take down the conversation while the video recorder will be used to capture both the images and voices during the conversation. Both video recorder and tape recorder will be transcribed later into a written text.

The names of: the college and that of the students will not be revealed in the final document that will be published.

I hope my request will receive your favourable consideration.

Yours faithfully

Dikuwa Alexander (Mr)

Signature

## **Appendix A3: Letter to The Education Officer (advisory services)**

P.O. Box 27  
Rundu  
Naminbia

13 March 2009

The Education Officer (advisory services)  
Kavango Regional Education office  
Namibia  
RUNDU

Madam

### **An invitation into a research**

I, Dikuwa Alexander- a teacher educator at Rundu College of Education invite you to take part in a research project that will be carried out with the year three (3) students who I currently lecture. In the project I request you to co-research with me as a non-participant observer during the lessons.

The research is for Med in Education Theory and Practice-Literacy in Curriculum study with Rhodes University. The research intends to find meaningful ways of teaching college students critical reading. Critical reading and critical thinking are intrinsically part of the teaching/learning activities at the colleges of education in Namibia. Teacher educators at the colleges of education in Namibia are thus expected to help college students develop critical thinking and reading competencies and attitudes. The research is also prompt by the realization that as a teacher educator I am responsible for the continuing development of my students' reading competency. I have come to realize that I am in a position to improve my students' reading attainment which might cascade to their learners, as the participant in this research: group 3B-major in the teaching of English is expected to teach critical reading upon their completion.

The research will be based on a lesson unit that will run over 10 college days from the 16/03/2009 to 28/03/2009 with the year 3B class. I intend to ask some of my colleagues for permission to use their periods and if that cannot materialize, I will arrange with the students to

have the lessons in the evening from 18 hours to 21 hours. And also, the research will not present anything different from what the students are supposed to learn at their level, but it will be relevant to 3rd year as outlined both in the Broad Curriculum and English Communication skills Syllabus 1998.

I have specifically invited you because of your valuable exposure in English Second language Teaching and Learning and your current state as a development official. Given below is a college timetable showing only those English period in 3B per week and you can come when the day and time suits you.

Days	Period 1 7:00-7:40	Per 7:40 8:20	Per 8:20 9:00	Per 9:00 9:40	10:20 11:00	11:00 11:40	11:40 12:20	Per 12:20- 13:00	Per 13:00 14:30- 15:50
Monday							•	•	
Tuesday						•	•	•	
Wednesday			•						•
Thursday									•
Friday	•	•							

The names of: the college, the students and the advisory teachers will not be revealed in the final document that will be published.

I hope my school will receive your favourable considerations.

Yours faithfully

Dikuwa Alexander (Mr)

#### **Appendix A 4: Letter to the (3B class) students**

Rundu college of Education  
RUNDU  
Namibia  
13 March 2009

Dear student

#### **Permission to use your photograph**

I, Dikuwa A, (Mr) lecturer at the above mentioned college, request you to permit me to carry out a research with you as a participant and to photograph and use your photograph with your image for the purpose of research report that will be presented in January 2010.

The research is for my studies with Rhodes University and it will be done in 3B where you are a member of the class. The main reason to use the photograph is to: show that something happened and to portray your involvement in the activities.

I would like you to know that you have a right to agree or to disagree as the photograph is only for research purposes. If you agree kindly fill in the space provided below.

Name	Student number	Signature

Thank you for your cooperation in advance. I can be contacted at: 0812798826.

Yours faithfully  
Dikuwa, A (Mr)

Sign

## APPENDIX B: Lesson plans

### Appendix B1: Lesson one

<p>LESSON 1</p> <p>Objectives: in the course of this lesson you should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand what facts and opinions are and</li><li>• Form opinions on the basis of what you have read in a given text.</li><li>• Learn about the use of phrases and language to express opinions, offer explanations, and disagree</li><li>• Discuss how critical reading happens and become more aware about how we read (metacognitive awareness),</li><li>• Read critically and thoughtfully; synthesize text knowledge and prior knowledge and decide to agree or disagree or not to take stand.</li><li>• Think critically. You will start to think about your thinking. Why did I think so?</li></ul>	
<p><b>ACTIVITIES</b></p>	
<p><b>1. Pre-reading activity</b></p>	

<p>Stage 1: Providing clear and understandable goals of the learning target.</p> <p>The researcher provides students with the objectives of the lesson and discusses what they (objectives) mean.</p> <p><b>Stage 2: Empowering students about fact and opinion - introducing students to language of opinion (phrases of opinion).</b></p> <p>The researcher gives students handouts: what is fact and what is opinion, the language (phrases) we use to express opinions e.g. I think ...indicate an opinion. The researcher then discuss with the students what fact and opinion, phrases and language used to express opinion, offering explanations and disagreeing.</p> <p><b>Stage 3: Making students aware about cognitive reading process.</b></p> <p>And then the researcher discusses with students how critical reading happens through the use of analogy i.e. “What is the first thing that you do when you see a beautifully wrapped gift? Your mind immediately fills with questions: What is inside? Is it for me? Who did this come from? Will I like it? The reading process takes the same root, that is, recognition, prediction, confirmation, correction and termination. Readers innately wonder...what is this book about? What do I know about this topic? Will I like it? What will I learn? Great readers... use curiosity to propel them forward in the text, predicting and wondering what will come next ask specific questions to guide them towards important ideas. Their questions help them determine importance and interact deeply within and across the text, with more questions than they began with: students reflect as they read. They monitor how they are reading as they reading – distinguishing between what they understand in the text and what they do not understand. How does this fit with what I already know? What does this remind me of? Is there more written by</p>	

<p>this author or about this subject? I wonder if? They see texts as "gifts" and use their ability and capacity to question, "unwrap" and unpack meaning".</p>	
<p><b>During/Whilst reading stage</b></p>	
<p><b>Stage 4: Employing the reading process - prediction, confirmation, correction and termination.</b></p> <p>Researcher gives each student a two paragraph text: "Men and women - Equal at last?" The researcher then asks students to skim the text and give it a title.</p>	
<p><b>Post-reading activity</b></p>	
<p>The researcher and the students discuss an appropriate headline for the text.</p> <p><b>Stage 5: Interact deeply within, beyond and across the text - Synthesizing, evaluating</b></p> <p>He then asks students to, once again individually and silently read the text and reflect on the issue and decide to agree with the writer, disagree or not to take a stand and warn them not to share their decision with the next person. The researcher will observe the reading process to make sure students do not talk to one another.</p> <p><b>Stage 6: Forming opinions and stating facts (students start to think about their thinking. Why did I think so?).</b></p> <p>The researcher tells students to go and stand (form a group) under the marked places: (description that best expresses their opinions) "I agree", "I disagree", "I am not sure". If the group is too big, the researcher will split it into two groups (of similar conviction) and appoint note takers for each group. The researcher then gives each group a poster and <b>Koki</b> pen and asks the note takers to write down the reasons. The researcher encourages students to talk about what they thought for example, why are you there? Why do you agree? Why do you</p>	

<p>say that? And also researcher encourages students to continuously refer to what they know and to what the text says. The researcher encourages each student to state why he/she has agreed, disagreed and why they are not sure.</p>	
<p><b>Stage 7: Identifying/separating facts and opinion.</b></p> <p>The researcher then asks students to display posters they have written in activity above. He (researcher) reminds students what they did and that is; what you did was to state fact or you expressed opinion. The researcher then tells the group to separate facts and opinion from the listed reasons. The researcher encourages students to use the handout (fact and opinion) to help them to tell facts from opinions. The researcher collects students' work and briefly discuss with the students facts and opinions they have identified.</p>	
<p><b>Journal writing: better?</b></p> <p>a) What did you do to understand/what help you to understand what you were reading?</p> <p>b) If you did not understand, what got in your way?</p> <p>c) What went well for you in the lesson?</p> <p>d) What did not go well for you in the lesson?</p> <p>e) If the lesson had to be repeated, in what ways do you think the researcher could improve his teaching of critical reading?</p>	

## Appendix B 2: Lesson two

<p><b>LESSON 2</b></p> <p><b>Objectives: in the course of this lesson you should be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify facts and opinions</li><li>• Read critically</li><li>• Understand inferences and infer</li><li>• Deconstruct a text to discover its structure</li><li>• Learn about bias in written article</li><li>• Learn about paragraph writing and topic sentence</li></ul>	
<p><b>ACTIVITIES</b></p>	
<p><b>Pre-reading activity</b></p>	
<p><b>Stage 1: Providing clear and understandable goals of the learning target.</b></p> <p>The researcher provides students with the goals above and discusses what they mean.</p> <p><b>Stage 2: Employing the reading process - prediction</b></p> <p>The researcher then provides each student with a copy of a reading article “Nothing short of radical reform will solve the education problem”. He asks the students to look at the title and to guess the meaning of the title. Several students suggest different answers. The researcher writes some of their suggested answers on the chalkboard and then asks them again: “which of these suggestions do you think are most likely to be right”? The researcher encourages students to indicate their choices by raising their hands and the researcher records the number of those in favour of different choices.</p>	
<p><b>Reading 2. Whilst-reading</b></p> <p>The researcher then instructs students to read the article silently to see if their selection was correct.</p>	
<p><b>Confirmation, correction and termination.</b></p> <p>After the students have skimmed the article, the researcher asks students if they</p>	

guessed right and asks them to read the section of the passage aloud that proves or disproves their predictions and the researcher confirms. Then the researcher asks students to set aside the article. The researcher and students briefly discuss the main sentence or topic sentence and its features. That is: what does a sentence constitute? The main or topic sentence “usually comes at the beginning of a paragraph; that is, it is usually the first sentence in a formal academic paragraph”. “It means that there are not many details in the sentence, but that the sentence introduces an overall idea that you want to discuss later in the paragraph”.

### **Reading critically (Reading thinking)**

The researcher then asks students to re-read the article carefully and thoughtfully and:

- In pairs identify and underline the topic sentence in each paragraph
- Give each paragraph a title.

### **Post-reading activity**

The researcher and the students discuss the topic sentences identified for each paragraph. They (students) should justify their choices.

### **paraphrasing and summarizing**

The researcher gives each student a blank page.

He tells them that they are to deliver the same message at a meeting and that they will be given 3 minutes only. So:

- Review the text
- Write important points only

Students can write as many or as few words as they want. After students have finished, the researcher gives them a very small blank piece of paper. The researcher then asks students to prioritize the most important points and write only those. Finally the researcher tells students to sit in groups (combined pairs) to see if they have the same points and discuss any differences and how they identified what was important in the article. The groups agree on the most important points and write them on posters. And at the bottom of the poster, in one sentence write what the text is about.

### **Plenary session**

The researcher asks students to display their posters and students views their

points. The students and the researcher briefly discuss why they think the points they have written are the most important.

**Introducing the concept inferences.**

And then as if making another comment the researcher writes: “I AM WAITING” and keeps quiet to observe students’ reaction to the statement. Some students might sit still. After a while, the researcher then asks: “what are you doing?” Some students might say: we are waiting for you! “What made you do that (wait)?” “Because you wrote you are waiting!” So? What does that have to do with it? Why did that make you sit still? All that I wrote was “I AM WAITING”. Students might say: But that means keep quiet because “I want to start”. “We are running out of time?” The researcher then says: Does it mean that? Do you want to tell me that “I AM WAITING” means all those things. So, I am not just letting you know that I am waiting?” Students might respond: “no, you are not”! So, when a friend of yours stands in the door of your room with his/her empty cup and says “I AM WAITING”, you keep quiet and look at him/her? Some students might say “no”! That would mean we are late we must go and eat”. So “I AM WAITING” can mean “keep quiet I want to start with the lesson” and sometimes it means “we are late”? How do we know the difference? “So literal words do not always mean what they say and that sometimes you have to think about who is saying them and where you are and what else is going on to figure out what they mean?” The students might say “yes”. The researcher then tells them: “that is what we call *inferences*”. The definition of inferences follows: “an inference is when we bring more thinking to language in order to figure out what they really mean.

**Reflections and journal writing:**

- a) What did you do to understand/what help you to understand what you were reading?
- b) If you did not understand, what got in your way?
- c) What went well for you in the lesson?
- d) What did not go well for you in the lesson?
- e) If the lesson had to be repeated, in what ways do you think the researcher could improve his teaching of critical reading?

### Appendix B 3: Lesson three

<p>LESSON 3</p> <p>Objectives: in the course of this lesson you should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read critically</li> <li>• Learn that adjectives of quality (type of adjectives) creates both opinions and facts</li> <li>• Learn how adjectives create opinions.</li> <li>• To infer.</li> </ul>	5 Minutes
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	
<b>Pre-reading activity</b>	
<p><b>Stage 1: Providing clear and understandable goals of the learning target.</b></p> <p>The researcher provides students with the objectives above and discusses what they mean.</p> <p><b>Stage 2: Offer explanations of the content – introducing students to the role of adjectives.</b></p> <p>The researcher provides students with handouts and discusses: the definition, roles, and the types of adjectives we have in English.</p>	10 Minutes
<b>Reading 1. Whilst-reading activity</b>	
<p><b>Stage 3: Providing students with easy exercise.</b></p> <p>The researcher then provides students with the exercise: six sentences to identify adjectives and the nouns they define.</p>	3 Minutes
<b>Post-reading activity</b>	
<p><b>Stage 4: Providing feedback.</b></p> <p>The researcher asks students to hand in their work and discuss the answers they (students) provided.</p>	
<b>Reading 2. Pre-reading</b>	
<p><b>Stage 5: Offering explanations (continues).</b></p> <p>The researcher and students then discuss the adjectives of quality i.e. starting with adjectives that create facts and then to those that create opinions. For example: I bought a white car (fact). I bought a beautiful white car (beautiful is</p>	

<p>an opinion). Beautiful and white are all adjectives of quality but white states fact whilst beautiful express an opinion.</p>	
<p><b>Stage 6: Offering explanations (continues).</b></p> <p>He then discusses “flexibility of adjectives of quality”, “comparative and formation of comparative adjectives” with the students.</p> <p><b>Stage 7: Employing the reading process – prediction</b></p> <p><b>Pre-reading activity</b></p> <p><b>Create your “Namibian dream”</b></p> <p>To create the Namibian dream, do the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. On a piece of paper, set your goal (what you want to attain or achieve) e.g. Development ( growth, expansion, advance etc)</li> </ol> <p>Attainment of your goal will depend on the citizens’ common understanding.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. What would you want all Namibians to understand? Then write</li> <li>3. How you would want your workers to perform or act at work.</li> <li>4. What would be some of the qualities you would require for promoting a worker?</li> <li>5. Do Namibians have those qualities you mentioned?</li> <li>6. If, they do not, write some points how you see Namibians.</li> </ol> <p>The researcher encourages students to make several different suggestions.</p>	
<p><b>Reading 2. Whilst-reading</b></p> <p>The researcher shares with the students that the editor of the Namibian newspaper has also made several suggestions about what a country (Namibia) needs to develop. He then provides each student a copy of “<i>Political Perspective</i>” of Friday, July 11, 2008. He instructs students to read the text silently to see what the editor</p>	

has suggested.

**Post-reading and whilst reading:**

**Confirmation, correction and termination.**

The researcher asks students to briefly share what the editor suggested. He then asks students to compare their Namibian dream to the editor's. They should re-read and write the similarities (theirs and the editor's) first, then the editor's suggestions, and then the differences and finally the editor's views.

The Namibian nation

<b>Our suggestions</b>	<b>similarities</b>	<b>editor's suggestion</b>
	<b>Differences</b>	<b>Her views about the Namibian nation</b>

**The article is about:**

The researcher and the students briefly discuss how parts of speech are indicated in a dictionary. For example: noun, verb, adj. (adjectives). Then, the researcher asks students to re-read the text again and to use dictionaries and as they re-read, identify and underline all the adjectives in the text. And with a partner, compare the adjectives they have identified and together, state the functions of those adjectives. For example: A New Era (newspaper) reporter writes: "a *sheer* ignorance and *financial* indiscipline ...". Sheer (an adjective) is used to express the degree of ignorance of the debtors - writer's opinion and financial (adj. that create fact) indiscipline is used here to point out the type of indiscipline he is concerned with. The researcher then asks students to hand in their work.

**INFERENCES**

The researcher tells students that they are to infer and provides them (students) with questions to answer. He goes through the questions with students and asks

them (students) if there is any question they do not understand and if there is any, the researcher will then scaffold them. The researcher then gives students questions based to the text to answer:

Individually, read the text below "*Nothing short of radical reform will solve the Education problem*" and answer all questions that follow on the spaces provided.

**Reflections and journal writing:**

- a) What did you do to understand/what help you to understand what you were reading?
- b) If you did not understand, what got in your way?
- c) What went well for you in the lesson?
- d) What did not go well for you in the lesson?
- e) If the lesson had to be repeated, in what ways do you think the researcher could improve his teaching of critical reading?  
you think the researcher could improve his teaching of critical reading?

## Appendix B4: Lesson four

<p><b>LESSON 4</b></p> <p><b>Objectives: in the course of this lesson you should be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn and use emotive language (persuasive language) to sway opinion.</li><li>• Learn that Newspaper reports often use emotive language rather than factual and neutral.</li><li>• Write your own perspective of the college to express your opinion.</li><li>• Re-write the editorial page factually.</li></ul>	
<p><b>Pre-reading activity</b></p>	
<p><b>Stage 1: Providing feedback</b></p> <p>Researcher briefly provides students with the feedback on the questions they have answered the previous day – inferences.</p> <p><b>Stage 2: Providing clear and understandable goals of the learning target.</b></p> <p>The researcher provides students with the objective for the lesson and discusses what the objectives mean to them (students). Remind students about the features of fact and opinion we have dealt with so far i.e. language used in facts and opinions (language used to express opinion, disagree, etc.), adjectives of quality. Then tell them that they are to learn about another feature: emotive language. Then, we are going to use them to write our own perspective of the college.</p> <p><b>Stage 2: Offer explanations of the content:</b> The researcher provides students with a handout on emotive language and discusses the use of emotive language “if something is <i>emotive</i> it makes people emotional. If you have just had your new bike stolen then your friends might avoid boasting about their bikes: bikes are an <i>emotive subject</i> for you at the moment”.</p> <p><b>Stage 3: Providing students with exercise:</b> The researcher then provides students with the exercise. For example: below are four pairs of headlines in each pair. Which headline is most likely to excite the reader? (a) or (b)?</p>	

<p><b>Stage 4: Providing feedback:</b> The researcher asks students to hand in their work and discuss the most exciting heading students have chosen.</p> <p><b>Staging 5: Giving students exercise and brief feedback:</b> The researcher gives students exercise: Now read the headlines below. Re-write them, replacing the words in <b>bold</b> with more emotive words. <i>The first two have been done for you as examples.</i> <b>Man</b> hit by <b>robbers</b> ( <i>Pensioner</i> hit by <i>muggers</i> ). A hundred peasants <b>killed</b> by troops. (A hundred peasants <i>slaughtered</i> by troops). He (researcher) asks students to hand in their work to the researcher.</p> <p>He then helps students discover how to identify synonyms of less/strong emotive words through the use of computer.</p>	
<p><b>Whilst-reading activity</b></p>	
<p><b>Stage 8: Employing the reading technique - reading critically</b></p> <p>The researcher then asks students to read the editorial carefully and thoughtfully and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In pairs identify and write the topic sentence in each paragraph.</li> <li>• Give each paragraph a title.</li> </ul> <p><b>Post-reading activities</b></p> <p>The researcher asks students to read the topic sentence they have identified in each paragraph and the researcher confirms. He then asks them (students) to read the title of a paragraph aloud and the researcher confirms - the titles may vary but the idea should be relevant.</p> <p><b>Pointing out the most important information</b></p> <p>The researcher give the students blank pages.</p> <p>Tell them that they are to deliver the same message at a meeting and that they will only be given 3 minutes to deliver their message. So:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the text</li> <li>• Write important points only</li> </ul> <p><b>Re-reading the text.</b> The researcher then asks students to read the article (the editorial of July 11, 2008) carefully and thoughtfully and identify and underline the emotive language the editor used in the first paragraph. When the students have finished, the researcher and the students omit emotive language used in the first paragraphs. He then explains <i>how</i> the writer's choice of words makes us feel about things/issues/people.</p>	

**Re-writing the article into factual text:** After the students have become aware of how both the presence and absence of emotive language influence the readers, the researcher then tells student to write the article into a factual article. The researcher instructs students to make a list of all the emotive words used in the editorial. Next to each word write a couple of alternative words that mean almost the same but are less emotive. The researcher tells students to set out their ideas in a chart – such as the one below.

<b>Emotive</b>	<b>Less emotive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>

The researcher then asks some students to share with the class the emotive language they have identified and the researcher correct or confirms.

**INFERENCES: Deepening understanding/going beyond literal text**

1. What kind of publication (text) is this? 2. To whom is the author writing? 3. How do you know that? 4. What is the problem the writer has identified his readers have and thus suggest a solution? 5. What in the text suggests that? 6. What is the solution to the problem the writer is proposing? 7. What in the text suggest that? 8. If we take this line of thinking seriously, what will be the implications? 9. If we fail to take this line of thinking seriously, what will be the implications? 10. What has the author thought (assumed) to be the facts/true? And so on.

**Journal writing**

- a) What did you do to understand/what help you to understand what you were reading?
- b) If you did not understand, what got in your way?
- c) What went well for you in the lesson?
- d) What did not go well for you in the lesson?
- e) If the lesson had to be repeated, in what ways do you think the researcher could improve his teaching of critical reading?

## Appendix B5: Lesson five

### **Objectives: in this lesson you will**

- Discuss the role of an editor and the reasons for the editorial page.
- Predict the issue likely to be addressed in the editorial page.
- Discover the intentions of the author.
- Re-write the editorial page factually.

### **Pre-reading activity**

#### **Stage 1: Providing clear and understandable goals of the learning target.**

The researcher provides students with the objective for the lesson and discusses what the objectives mean to them (students). He announces the intentions of the lesson i.e. now that we know which adjectives we can use to form opinion, phrases to express opinion, to disagree etc. we are going to omit them from the editorial so that we can re-write the editorial factually. The researcher then warns students that to do that they will sometimes have to restructure the sentence.

#### **Stage 2: Providing students with schemata to make sense of what they are to read and write.**

Discuss with the students the historical background of the editor and newspaper i.e. the year the newspaper was established, its relationship with that time's oppressed, the role it played including during the 1989 campaigns, the arrest of the editor etc. The researcher then provides students with **a handout on the function of an editorial page**. Students and the researcher then discuss the purposes and functions of the editorial page.

#### **Stage 5: Employing the reading process**

The researcher asks students if they have heard about the misunderstanding between SWAPO and the RDP over an open space for their respective political campaign rallies – if students do not know, the researcher briefly tells them. He then asks students: “What do you think the editor might say about the issue?” Several students will suggest different answers. The researcher will write some of their suggested answers on the chalkboard and then asks them again: “which of these predictions do you agree with”? And also: “which political party

(SWAPO or RDP) is the editor likely to sympathize with”? The researcher will encourage students to make several different suggestions. The researcher tells them “I am going to give you the gift and you must “unwrap” it to see if you guessed right”. Then he distributes copies of the **“political perspective” of: Friday July 25, 2008.**

### **Whilst-reading**

The researcher instructs students to read the text and find out if they have guessed right.

### **Post-reading**

### **Stage 6: confirmation, correction and termination.**

The researcher asks students to read the passage aloud that prove or disprove their predictions and the researcher confirms.

### **Whilst-reading**

The researcher then asks students to in pairs re-read the editorial carefully and thoughtfully, that is:

- Identify and write the topic sentence in each paragraph.
- Give each paragraph a title.

### **Post-reading**

The researcher asks a pair to read their identified topic sentence aloud to the whole class and the class agrees or disagrees and if they disagree, another pair reads their topic sentence and say why they think that is the topic sentence and the researcher confirms.

The researcher asks several students to briefly summarize the editorial orally.

### **Whilst-reading activity**

The researcher and students identify features of opinion in the first paragraph and then omit them and restructure the sentences if necessary to make it a fact and as well as to make it meaningful. The researcher then tells student that that is what they are to do for homework and ask them to leave for the time being.

### **Deepening understanding/going beyond literal text**

The researcher then gives students questions and tells them to read the editorial again and as they read answer these questions: How does what you already know differ from this version? Or what are the similarities? To whom is the editor writing? What is the relationship between the editor and reader? How important is the issue being raised to you? To who is it important/is it not important?

## **APPENDIX C: Assessments activities**

### **Appendix C1: Diagnostic text**

#### **Bearing the brunt of failed leadership**

**I have learned one thing clearly. Africa abounds with leaders who ascend to the throne with pomp and a determination to reverse the dark past.**

They shine for a few years but as they begin to overstay their welcome, the dark past or even worse creeps back in. As we are truly aware as Africans, it is inherent in us to always blame our failure on the West. I do not think they blame their failures on us as Africans. Because they too have their own failures. Take Zimbabwe for example, a country that was almost unmatched in food production and education in Africa today is today is so close to a dustbin. When the March 29 elections came, I expected a smooth transaction and I believe the incumbent should lose. I love and respect the man but think and believe that however long he will wishes to cling to power he will never reverse the economic blunder in Zimbabwe.

I know the man, like many mind-blinded leaders in Africa including Namibia, have said that their nations will not be ruled by an opposition party. Utter hogwash. The electorates belong to themselves when it comes to choice of a political party. Voters are human beings and can swing their choices at will, no man can hold them hostage to vote only for him when it is clear he is fast driving them to an early grave. Swapo has made such comments. That no opposition will rule this country as a top military official was quoted saying at Omuthiya. Just like the news from Zimbabwe, the President there is being misled by his army officials. Soldiers by their very nature are never democratic. When the nation wants democracy soldiers on government payroll are blind to the concept and cannot be asked for advice. We have seen in the former Zaire that they had to recue by Mobuto's death. Many seem to wait for that to salvage them from their political shames. Humiliation awaits them outside their state houses which is why they do not want to step out of these havens. But humiliation is a process. One can see it coming and act accordingly, that is, step out before it happens. We have had a number of comments from the Swapo youth league officials blaming the West. It is not true. Leave the West out of this. The past is gone, Zimbabwe was ruled well for years without the West interfering,

and so what we see now cannot be placed at the western doors but the President's only. Where have you seen a president who allows people to grab productive land violently, inconsiderate of economic outcomes? Which West can be blame in such exercise? Leadership can be equated to soccer skills, there is a summit and a slope, when the slope comes, one must exit gracefully. No harm done with that. There is truth in the saying that 'nothing lasts forever'. Swapo should not think it will be there forever, votes are not guaranteed, and they can change. African leaders must uphold the supreme laws of their countries and not attempt to make amendments to those laws to extend their hold to power. Sadly the innocent people always end up bearing the brunt of failed leaders. How many Zimbabweans will cross neighbouring borders in pursuit for a change elsewhere?

## Appendix C2: Diagnostic assessment questions

Test questions are based on: evaluating text or information, drawing inferences, making judgments, and figuring out the author's thinking processes or the author's stance and identify the underpinning assumptions.

**Diagnostic assessment** objective is: To inform the researcher about the level of your reading proficiency visa-a-visa critical reading.

### Questions

Individually, read the text below "Bearing the brunt of failed leadership" and answer all questions that follow on the spaces provided.

1. What kind of publication is this?

.....

2. What type of writing is this?

.....

3. What is the reason for the author to have written this article?

.....

.....

4. To whom is the author writing?

.....

5. What in the article suggest that?

.....

.....

6. What has the author assumed to be the facts/true?

.....

.....

7. What in the article suggest that?

.....

.....

8. What is the underlying assumption?

.....

.....

9. What does the author imply when he says “Leadership can be equated to soccer skills, there is a summit and a slope, when the slope comes, one must exit gracefully?”

.....  
.....

10. Looking at the whole text, what conclusion does the author reach about the issue he raised? .....

.....

11. What is the relationship between the reader and the writer?

.....  
.....

12. What in the text suggest that?

.....

13. Considering the whole text, what does she wants us to believe?

.....  
.....

14. Do you believe him/her?

.....

15. What in the text make you believe him/do make you not believe him?

.....  
.....

16. Do certain sections make you feel pleased? Guilty? Angry? Annoyed? Saddened?

.....  
.....

17. Which section is that?

.....  
.....

18. Do you think the author intended that effect?

.....  
.....

19. If he intended that, how did he create that effect?

.....  
.....

20. The writer disproves the leadership. What is the motive for the author to disprove the current leadership?

.....  
.....

21. Explain in your own words, how the author reached his conclusion.

.....  
.....

22. What is the Question or hypothesis that the text attempts to answer?

.....  
.....

23. What is the claim or thesis of the article?

.....  
.....

24. What types of evidence are used to support the main claim?

.....  
.....

25. Has the author used facts or opinion?

.....  
.....

26. What are some of the examples of fact and opinion?

.....  
.....

26. Does the writer present both sides of an argument, 'for' and 'against'?

.....  
.....

27. Did the argument you read change the way you see leaders in Namibia?

.....  
.....

28. The writer possess questions "Where have you seen a President who allows people to grab productive land violently, inconsiderate of economic outcomes? Which West can we

blame in such exercise?" What is the reason?

.....  
.....  
29. What is the problem the writer has identified his readers have and thus suggest solution?

.....  
.....  
30. Where is the problem?

.....  
.....  
31. What according the writer is the cause of the problem?

.....  
.....  
32. When is the problem happening?

.....  
.....  
33. What is the solution to the problem the writer is proposing?

## **Appendix C 2: Summative assessment text**

### **Chance of relief those who need it**

**It is heartening to hear President Hifikepuny Pohamba assure the nation that Government will soon announce measures to reduce the impact of high food and fuel prices as well as electricity shortages on citizens.**

Speaking on Thursday at the conclusion of a three day Cabinet retreat in Walvis Bay, the President added that he expected “speedy results from his Ministers in addressing Namibia’s most pressing socio-economic needs”. In addition to mitigating the impact of food, fuel and power price hikes, he emphasized that short-term programmes should be in place to provide adequate housing and sanitation, securing of local food production and micro-credit access.

The President has made a number of promises, which we hope are not just short-term politicking. If change is to be brought about, and if measures are to be introduced to assist with the impact of high food and fuel prices, then it needs to be done soon and the President needs to spearhead the process to ensure that there is resonance in his Government. He added: “all of us must be held accountable. Indeed I will continue to hold Ministers accountable for the performance of those (they delegate)”.

The President made similar statements before, and yet words are seldom turned into action, at least not on a consistent basis. He can surely not expect Ministers, and other senior office bearers, to try to minimize the financial burdens carried in these times by the less well-off members of society, when they hardly seem able to manage their own affairs despite earning good salaries and generous benefits! And if they do not comply with accountability, then we would urge the President, regardless of party-political considerations, to choose his Cabinet with more care, for if Ministers cannot deliver, there seems little point in keeping such people on, because the end result will be to make the Head of State himself look foolish by making promises he cannot keep by virtue of slack political leadership.

The president also needs to ensure that merit starts playing a role in the choices he makes, rather than the ‘jobs for comrades’ policy which has been an unmitigating disaster, and the economic graveyard in Namibia is little with the figurative corpses of those who were unable to adequately perform the tasks to which they were assigned.

At a meeting earlier this week organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation to find solution to the dramatic food price hikes, the consensus was that there is no ‘quick fix’. One of the recommendation was an increase in social pensions and grants to vulnerable persons and groups; while VAT exemptions were shot down from the point of view that they might work asw short –term relief, bu;t would take from consumers in other ways at a later stage. We should still urge government, however, to consider VAT exemption on essential foods. At present only maize is VAT exempt, while the prices of other essentials, such milk and cooking oil, have skyrocketed.

There is still good argument for exemption of VAT on milk and cooking oil, example, which would certainly provide some relief to the poor. Upper foods production would reduce dependency on expensive imports, but this is not likely to happen in the short term. Government along with the private sectorts and others, needs to look at the situation in Naminbia holistically and bring in measures, even if incrementally, as soon as possible to ensure that impoverished Namibians feel some relief in the near future. We are encourage by the ensurance of the President Pohamba, and hope to see Government take action very soon.

**Activity**

1. What kind of publication is this?

.....  
.....

2. What type of writing is this?

.....  
.....

3. To whom is the author writing?

.....  
.....

4. What in the article suggests that?

.....  
.....

5. What motivated the author to write this article?

.....  
.....

6. What in the article suggests that?

.....  
.....

7. What is the question the article is attempting to answer?

.....  
.....

8. What is the main assumption underlying the author's thinking?

.....  
.....

9. If we take this line of thinking seriously, what will be the implication?

.....  
.....

10. If we fail to take this line of thinking seriously, what will be the implication?

.....  
.....

11. What does the author want us to believe?

.....  
.....

12. What in the article suggests that?

.....  
.....

13. What are some of the facts the author has stated?

.....  
.....

14. How does the writer see the president?

.....  
.....

15. What in the article suggests that?

.....  
.....

16. What is the conclusion she has reached?

.....  
.....

17. How does she reach the conclusion?

.....  
.....

18. Did the argument you read change the way you see Namibia?

.....  
.....

19. If it did/not, explain how it changed or did not change the way you see Namibia?

.....  
.....

20. How strong does the writer feel about the issue she is writing?

.....  
.....

21. Quote a sentence to support your view.

.....  
.....

22. Are there sections or sentences that make you feel pleased? Guilty? Angry? Annoyed? Saddened? Choose one feeling?

.....  
.....

23. Quote one of that section or those sentences.

.....  
.....

24. Do you think the author intended that effect?

.....  
.....

25. If he intended that effect, how did he create that effect?

.....  
.....

26. Does the writer present both sides of an argument, "for" and "against"?

.....  
.....

27. Provide one example of the cause and effect the writer has stated.

.....  
.....

28. Write and explain how the writer makes clear what she refers to? Or does she leave those to the readers to guess what she refers to?

.....  
.....

The writer has identified a problem and that's why he has written the article.

29. What is the main the problem the author has identified?

.....  
.....

30. Who does she see causes the problem?

.....  
.....

31. What in the text suggests that?

.....  
.....

**Appendix D: Handout**  
**Appendix D 1: Inferences**

With a partner find three examples of oral language that requires inferences. You can choose “words someone said” to you or “to someone else or on TV”. Record your examples as in the chart form below. *Note: not all languages require inferences.*

Literal words	Other possible meanings	What they really mean/In this case it meant/The meaning behind these literal words were:	How you know
I am going	I am departing I am dying I am resigning I am traveling	I am dying	The speaker was in hospital.
1.			

## Appendix D 2 : Handout: adjectives

### 3.1 Adjectives

From the paragraph above, we can see that we are able to separate fact and opinion, using adjectives if we know what they (descriptive words) are and what they do. The next discussion therefore focuses on what adjectives are and how they form opinion and fact.

### 3.2 Definition of adjectives

An adjective is a word that tells us more about a noun, what it is or adapt a noun.

(Boring but interesting,n.d.; Wikipedia, n.d.; McGuigan 2003). Noun includes pronouns and noun phrases. Wikipedia, (n.d.) provides examples:

- A *big* dog. *Big* in this sentence is an adjective which (qualifies) tells more about (the noun) *dog* we are talking about.
- *Chinese* food. *Chinese* is an adjective defining the noun *food*.
- That is a *big* building. *Big* in this sentence is an adjective that tells us more about the noun *a building*.

“Without the use of these adjectives (big, old etc), actually, we lose a lot; and we may be short in expressing our emotions, opinions, and the impressions we have about a given subject”, (Boring but interesting, n.d., unpagged).

### 3.3 The role of adjective in English Language

The role of adjectives is that of making a thing or a noun talked about clear and which in turn makes a message clear. Boring but interesting (n.d.), contends that a message without adjectives is actually a dull one. For example: “Yesterday, I bought a car”. The message in the latter is not clear, as the adjective that modifies a preceding noun as a predicate is not there (Boring but interesting,n.d.; McGuigan 2003). To make the message unambiguous, meaningful and compelling, the writer or the speaker needs to directly connect an adjective to the noun, i.e. car as in: “Yesterday, I bought a red car” (McGuigan 2003, Boring but interesting, n.d., unpagged). The attributive adjective i.e. red has helped the message become much clearer than the first sentence. However, it can still be made much clearer by adding other adjectives as in: “yesterday, I bought a beautiful, small, red car” (Boring but interesting, n.d.). The adjectives here give an exact and comprehensible picture of the car being talked. For that reason, some researchers have declared that adjectives are the backbone of any cogent expression (ibid.). The preceding assertions can be summarized as follow: adjectives are used to describe, qualify or modify a

noun or pronoun, but it can also be used to enrich and clarify ideas and lead to the interlocutors to communicate eloquently (Boring but interesting, n.d.).

### 3.4 Types of adjectives

Boring but interesting, (n.d.); Wikipedia, (n.d.); McGuigan (2003) have identified the following 6 types of adjectives found in the English language:

- Adjective of quality such as: square, good, golden, fat, heavy, dry, clever
- Demonstrative adjective such as: this, that, these, those
- Distributive adjective such as: each, every, either, neither
- Qualitative adjective such as: some, any, no, few, many, much, one, twelve,
- Interrogative adjective such as: which, what, whose
- Possessive adjective such as: my, your, his, her, its, our, their

For this research, attention is focused on adjectives of quality only for two reasons.

Firstly: they are flexible and thus can be used to create opinions.

Secondly, we use adjectives of quality in many different situations, such as in comparing two nouns or objects.

### 3.5 Adjective of quality in forming facts and opinions

Some adjectives of quality are used to create facts (Boring but interesting, n.d.). For example:

Namibia has a *blue, white, green* and *red* flag. The adjectives of quality in this sentence are:

*blue, white, green* and *red*. These colours on the flag are adjectives of quality,

which can be observed and can thus be confirmed as factual (or not).

In this case, adjectives: *blue, white, green* and *red* has been used to form a fact about the flag.

But while adjectives of quality: *blue, white, green* and *red* create fact, others (adjectives of quality) create opinion. For we can add another adjective to that sentence:

Namibia has a *beautiful blue, white, green* and *red* flag”.

The adjective of quality we added: “*beautiful*” define the noun – flag too.

However, unlike *blue, white, green* and *red* that can be checked in terms of our observations (evidence), “*beautiful*” (the adjective we added) cannot be established as a ‘fact’ in this way.

It is simply an opinion that could differ from anyone else's – what constitutes as beautiful to one person

may be viewed as ugly to another person.

### 3.6 Adjectives of quality change

“The adjectives of quality can change in meaning once their context has been changed”, (Boring but interesting, n.d., unpagged). That is they change their meaning sometimes from the denotative “to the figurative one”, meaning (ibid.). For example the adjective *pretty* (opinion) denotatively *means* attractive but in another context, it means "fine or good" (figurative).

### 3.7 Comparative Adjectives

To form opinion about a thing or people, we sometimes use the comparative adjectives of quality to compare their “quality”, “height”, “weight” to one another. In that context, we can tell the similarities and the differences. For example:

1. sugar is more expensive *than* cake flour,
2. car seats are less comfortable *than* the living room seats, interesting,
3. A cat is more intelligent *than* a dog.
4. In the sentences above, “comparative adjective is followed by "than", (Comparative adjective, n.d., unpagged).
5. “If we talk about the two planets Earth and Mars, we can compare them as shown in the table below”, (Comparative Adjectives, n.d. unpagged):

	<b>Earth</b>	<b>Mars</b>	
Diameter (km)	12,760	6,790	Mars is <i>smaller</i> than Earth.
Distance from Sun (million km)	150	228	Mars is <i>more distant</i> from the Sun.
Length of day (hours)	24	25	A day on Mars is slightly <i>longer</i> than a day on Earth.
Moons	1	2	Mars has <i>more</i> moons than Earth.
Surface temperature (°C)	22	-23	Mars is <i>colder</i> than Earth.

### 3.8 Formation of Comparative Adjectives

There are two ways to make or form a comparative adjective:

- **short** adjectives: add "**-er**" i.e. **shorter**

1-syllable adjectives e.g. old, fast, i.e. older, faster

2-syllable adjectives ending in -y e.g. happy, easy i.e. happier, easier

Variation: if the adjective ends in -e, just add -r e.g. late > later

Variation: if the adjective ends in consonant, vowel, consonant, double the last consonant e.g. big > bigger

Variation: if the adjective ends in -y, change the y to i i.e. happy > happier

In **long** adjectives like intelligent, comfortable, expensive, use the modifiers "**more**" for comparatives and "**the most**" for superlatives". For example,

- The book is more *interesting* than the film.
- A car is more *comfortable* than a donkey back.
- The plane is **the most** *expensive* means of transport.
- This is **the most** *exciting* film I've ever seen

### Exception

The following adjectives have irregular forms:

- good > better
- well (healthy) > better
- bad > worse
- far > farther/further

All in all, we use "adjectives in many situations in different styles according to what idea we want to convey; and how we want it to look like so as to carry a message clear enough to decode easily". For example: "The dog is intelligent. The cat is intelligent, too. I think, the cat is as intelligent as the dog". The two pets are seen to be equal in their intelligence faculty thanks to the adjective "intelligent" assisted by the expression "as...as". This structure can bear both short and long adjectives without exceptions.

## **Appendix D 3: Handout: facts and opinion**

### **Fact and opinion**

Critical reading among others involves separating facts and opinion. This lesson explores the concepts and dichotomy of facts and opinions.

#### **What is a fact?**

Facts can be classified into three categories. That is:

Fact as an action: A thing done or to have happened –knowledge based on “real occurrence or event”. For example: The college was inaugurated on February 20, 1997.

Obsolete: Something demonstrated to have existed i.e. outdated, archaic, superseded, outmoded, past it, old-fashioned. For example: dinosaurs extinct in the 1800.

Feat: Something demonstrated to exist i.e. achievement, accomplishment, deed, exploit, act, that is actually done or performed and has evidence. For example: Frank Fredrick was one of the fastest men in the world. My son had a temperature of one hundred and two degrees this morning.

Fact as evidence (as an entity): “A fact is a statement that can be proven as true or false”. something that has actual existence, the quality of being actual (definite, genuine, authentic, concrete, tangible). For example: Today is Monday.

Fact as an objective reality (object, purpose, aim, point, idea, goal, intention, intent), prove the fact of damage- a piece of information presented as having objective reality, a thing that is known to be true, especially when it can be proved, any statement strictly true; truth; reality, things that are true rather than things that have been invented”, (Hornby, p. 523/4). “a truth known by actual experience or observation”. Something believed to be true or real. For example: Jesus was born in Jerusalem.

Fact as non-rule adherer: Facts are unambiguous or have no sub goals and as such, it is always true. Fact does not operate on the basis of rules that only succeeds if all its sub goals do. Rules usually contain logic variables, facts rarely do, except for oddities like “equal (x, x

## **What is opinion?**

Opinion is thinking based on logic: All opinions derive from logical thinking, it is conclusion thinkers logically reach after a careful examination of knowledge but has not been proven or verified. For example: *This teacher does not mark the learners work. He is a lazy man.* Knowledge here refers to anything a person know, information a person is exposed to, facts, data, acquaintance, familiarity, awareness, understanding or comprehension” upon which conclusion is based.

(Webster-merriam) defines opinion as an “attitude, a point of view, estimation, judgement, notion, thought, sentiment which the mind forms of persons or things. For example: *Students can easily be convinced to march and boycott classes if you tell their leaders that the college belongs to one tribe but not to anybody else.*

Formal decision, or expression of views of a judge or of an umpire or of a counselor, or other party officially called upon to consider and decide upon a matter or point submitted”. For example: *The town council decided to deny people access to the beach because the damaged road might cause accident.*

Opinions are indicated with words (among others) such as: “Generally, it is thought”, “I believe that”, “It is a sad day when.”, In my opinion..., The reason why..., I’d prefer..., Don’t you think it would be better..., For this reason..., That’s why..., The problem with your point of view is that... I doubt if., Considering..., I suspect that..., I’m pretty sure that..., It is fairly certain that...,

#### **Appendix D 4: Agree and disagree**

The researcher tells students to go and stand (form a group) under the marked places: (description that best expresses their opinions) "I agree", "I disagree", "I am not sure".

## Appendix E: Reading texts

### Text: A

#### **Nothing Short Of Radical Reform Will Solve The Education Problem**

ANDREW CLEGG

**HERE we are again at exam results time.**

And once again we see a mass wringing of hands deploring the state of the education system generally and the performance of the teachers in particular. Of course there are some bad teachers (there are actually some dreadful ones but nobody ever sacks them - you can be dismissed for a lot of things as a teacher but not being able to teach is not one of them). But there are also a whole lot of very good hard-working ones out there and they should be congratulated on doing a difficult job conscientiously. Their main problem is that what they are forced to teach is often utterly unrelated to the needs of their pupils.

Governments have always used the curriculum as a means of social control. The British, in colonial times, were particularly good at this. They needed an educational filtration system; only the finest should be able to get through their colonial schools to help them run 'their' colonies. So they set up a series of annual hurdles - standards, remember the name? - designed to trip up all but the best. The great majority fell, as intended, unwanted by the wayside.

Apartheid South Africa took this over and raised it to an art form. Through its complex system of standards and administrations receiving widely differing resources, it was able to design a system that admirably suited its rigidly stratified society. The system was tailor-made to create failure for the under-resourced majority and success for the privileged minority. In 1988, I recall, no student in the Administration for the Caprivians could get standard 10 sciences (the pathway to success) because there were no standard 10 science teachers. Why? Because no Caprivian could get standard 10 science. So perfect and so simple. (It wasn't quite perfect of course, a few whites failed the math but in any system you have to put up with a bit of collateral damage).

So what happened to the apartheid curriculum at Independence? Well, nothing very much.

The old system, tailor-made to generate failure, was adopted lock, stock and almost barrel. Except that 11 administrations were reduced to one. In fact, in the interests of 'quality' some of the standard hurdles, I recall, were actually raised a bit. But, importantly, to create an impression of reform, the names were changed - 'standards' became 'grades', to give the whole thing a modern transatlantic flavour. So why do we now throw up our hands in horror when 17 000 children are on the streets after grade 10. The system is performing exactly to specification.

The 17 000 statistic, however, hides something much more sinister. Many, very probably the great majority, of the 17 000 have dropped out not because the subjects are too difficult for them, but because they cannot read or write in English or do simple sums. There is no concrete evidence for this because the Ministry has no testing processes, but ask the teachers and they talk many at grade 8 unable to read and write well enough to make progress with their learning. And they will tell you that this is particularly bad in places where English has been the teaching language from grade 1. The reason for this is simple to understand. Reading, writing and arithmetic are the basic skills that children have to pick up in the first three years. If they have not mastered them by then they get no further opportunity in the curriculum.

In the past they would not have been allowed to proceed beyond the first three years unless they had mastered these skills but that is no longer the case; they can now only repeat only one of the years. And so probably as many as 40 per cent, so we hear, reach the end of grade 7 effectively illiterate and innumerate. We have the worst of all possible worlds.

So what is to be done? Clearly the old 1930s colonial curriculum has to go. It is no good just giving it a lick of paint as in the latest reform. It has to be replaced by one that is fundamentally redesigned for success rather than failure. There are lots of examples around of many different kinds. In fact all countries with a more advanced economy than Namibia have done something like this; it is an essential pre-requisite for development. They all have curricula which operate simultaneously at different levels in a particular grade; if a grade 7 child still needs help with basic reading skills then that should happen - in grade 7. If a grade 7 child is turned on by simultaneous equations, then that too should happen.

And it will save a lot of money. Failing children costs the country over N\$200 million a year.

On average a grade 10 child takes 11 and bit years to get to the end of grade 10. One in five of all grade 8 seats is occupied by someone who is repeating - the sole reason for all the admission problems we see year after year. All children could be admitted up to grade 12 at almost no extra cost. This would not, as many fear, lead to a drop in standards (can they drop further?). It would probably not lead to an immediate rise in the top standards at grade 12 though it will in the longer run.

But it would mean that vastly more children would learn to read and write and, above all, there would not be the annual 17 000 carrying into the world the stigma of failure. So forget the ETSIP reforms. Nothing will really work until the foundation is right.

\* Andrew Clegg has lived in Namibia since 1991 when he came to train science teachers for the Ministry of Education.

He is now a consultant and trainer working mainly in Africa and the Middle East. Friday, January 19, 2007 - Web posted at 8:00:06 GMT

## **Reading text B**

### **Men and women - Equal at last?**

To start with, let us look at representation of women and men in different government departments, semi-autonomous companies etc. in Namibia. In each of these departments or companies, we have many women in the leading role. The notion of men dominating government affairs is no more. Not only do the women lead the different departments in the Namibian government but they also own companies.

In this light, we can say that a lot of progress has been made since the 1960s. For example, television series now portray women as successful career makers. Many men in Namibia are now sharing in the responsibilities of raising children and household responsibilities. Many important laws have been passed to ensure equality in the workplace. There is even a talk to change the law to allow men to take leave from work to look after the newly arrived baby. So, equality has become a reality. Have you ever heard of Liberia Suisun?

Men and women in Rend for example, earn the same salaries in work situations. Men and women are found selling things in the street of Rend. Look at the local sporting. How many professional female leagues are successful like their male counterparts? We sometimes have this kind of debate just for the sake of it.

## Reading text C

### Political Perspective

Friday, July 11, 2008 - Web posted at 9:03:06 AM GMT

GWEN LISTER

**AS a nation, we need to seriously get back to the basics, in almost every sense. We cannot reach for the skies or attain our goals unless we've got good and solid foundations in virtually all areas of national life.**

Politicians must get back in touch with the people (and I don't mean by giving more speeches!) and the people need to be helped to forge an understanding of their basic responsibilities which must accompany all their rights. LET'S take a number of examples. The economy - yes, we want to make it work for us so we are able to provide our people with all the basics and more. Like the 'American dream', it should be possible for those from all walks of life to attain the 'Namibian dream' too. But by honest, rather than devious means.

And if we take it back to the basics, then what do we really need to boost our economy? Firstly, we need people who are prepared to work hard. Surely this is a non-negotiable. Do we have a hardworking nation or a strong work ethic? In general terms, no. And I would insist that this is the most fundamental change we need to make in order to go forward.

Do we have an honest nation? Again I would maintain in general terms that we don't. Too much culture of entitlement, too much complacency, too much of an uncaring attitude of what it means to have work and to do it well, and to know that if you do better, you can ascend the ranks. That is what the 'Namibian dream' should be all about. Working hard, being honest, and attaining one's personal goals, be they material or otherwise.

Do we have role models (if this is what we aspire towards?) - private individuals who made their money through hard work, innovation, creativity, and business skills, whether learned or earned? Not many. If we had a Forbes-like index of the 100 wealthiest individuals in Namibia, how many of them would stand out as examples to the community? Again, I would guess, only a few. The rest - and we all know it - individuals who suddenly appear to have accumulated vast wealth, have probably done so through ill-gotten gains in too many cases. And that is unfortunately the example that is set - a bad one.

Why would anyone choose to work hard, go through the system from novice to junior to senior, picking up skills and experience along the way, if many of our elite have reached these heights with minimal effort? We need to ask ourselves these questions. Let's take education as the second example. This underpins what I've talked about above. If we cannot have an education system which takes people to a certain minimal level in terms of English language skills (which for better or worse is our official medium of instruction) then we can be as fancy as we like, but to no avail.

We will not turn out good students, and we will not promote a strong and literate workforce, whether at white- or blue-collar level. We can spout the need for science and maths education as much as we like, but we will not succeed in building our human resource levels if they don't have a basic, thorough grounding in English. So again, I would say that it's necessary for our education sector to put aside all grandiose plans until such time as we have an English literate youth.

Take then the issue of our labour force as a totality. Without abovementioned basics, those who are the menial workers of society will stay that way forever, without any prospect of advancement if they are not properly grounded in the English language and the honest work ethic. With these tools, it should be possible for nearly everyone in Namibia to have a future they can aspire towards. Someone like a shop salesperson will be more customer friendly because they can communicate, firstly, and secondly, have understanding of what their job in the service industry entails, and thirdly, understand what is expected of them, and what they need to advance. And advance they will if they can understand their customer's needs, can communicate pleasantly and co-operate efficiently.

Not everyone can be a millionaire, self-made or otherwise, but a good life should be quite within reach to those who know what is required to advance. Unfortunately, and I believe many will agree on a fairly negative attitude towards our service industry workers, more often than not one encounters shop assistants for instance (this is just an example which counts for all work sectors) who are surly, shrug their shoulders if one has a query, don't greet customers, and generally make it appear that they couldn't give a damn. And truth is, they probably don't.

They [there] are those who will miss work at the slightest sniff, be the first to demand wage hikes and run to unions and to the Labour Court if they are taken to task! So let us get rid of the

manager who can't and doesn't manage; the student who doesn't attend class and writes no assignments yet expects to pass; in short, those who feel entitled, even though they do minimal work or are guilty of other wrongdoings, and yet call on society to protect them when they are taken to task. This attitude now seems part of our national psyche and we need to get back to basics to get it (us) right as a crucial first step to developing our economy and thereby our nation.

## Reading text D

One report is from *The Independent*; the other is from *The Star*. **The report from *The Star* is in two parts. Read the reports from both papers.**

### Mike Gatting gets canned at tea-time

MIKE GATTING walked 150 yards through a chanting throng of demonstrators outside the Jan Smuts Stadium here yesterday to receive a petition concerning poor playing conditions in the Natal townships.

Protected by the demonstrators' own stewards, who linked arms on either side of the pathway, Gatting – with Ali Bacher, the managing director of the South African Cricket Union and the man behind the tour, David Gravney, manager of the English team and John Emburey, one of the players – was subjected to a shower of stones and a few soft-drink cans during the walk back. A can bounced off Gatting's shoulder, but otherwise

From **Richard Evans** in Pietermaritzburg

"You guys in the British press have vilified Mike. But he has come here with no knowledge of the country and has said nothing more stupid than a lot of white South Africans do every day. The situation is extraordinarily complex and many people who have lived here all their lives still don't understand it."

It all happened at the tea interval during the third match of this inflammatory tour. Within a minute of returning, Gatting walked into the dressing-room and said: "Come on, lads, let's get out there." He then led the team on to

standing behind a low wall. But Mohammed Casimjee, one of the protestors, insisted that he walk to a podium 150 yards from where the biggest rally of the tour – nearly 5,000 blacks and Indians – had been marshalled. "You are guaranteed safe in, safe out," Mr Casimjee said, "Nothing will happen to you."

Dr Bacher looked somewhat doubtful about that, but Gatting moved forward and, after a conversation with the protestors, set off. Despite the stones, the anger was contained. Chants of "Gatting go home" went on unabated, but nothing was thrown while the former England captain was on the podium, and

the cricket party escaped. the field and Graveney on the journey back the  
"It was the most heroic bowled the second over stewards did an excellent  
sporting achievement off after tea. job. "Gatting is a brave  
the field I have ever seen," The original plan had man," one Indian said,  
Dr Bacher said when the been for Gatting to walk "but I still think that the  
party returned to the out of the main gates to tour should be stopped."  
pavilion. receive the petition while

*(The Independent)*

## Reading text E

### Gatting stoned by mob at demo

CRICKET rebel Mike Gatting ran for his life yesterday when he stoned by an angry mob.

A sea of missiles rained down on him from a 4,000-strong South African horde after he agreed to meet a deputation.

The shocked rebel captain thought he was going to receive a protest note.

### Bottles

But instead he was pelted with bottles and stones.

He was hit by a drink can and the crowd screamed "Gatting go home" as he raced for the safety of a cricket ground.

## REBEL GATTING RUNS GAUNTLET OF DEMO HATE

From JACK RIDGE in Pietermaritzburg

REBEL cricket captain Mike Gatting was pelted with stones by screaming hordes yesterday.

And he was struck by a Coca-Cola can as he faced the fury of a 4,000-strong South African mob.

Gatting had agreed to meet a deputation of anti-tour campaigners.

But instead of an expected note of protest, he was met by a hail of stones and a torrent of abuse.

Stewards were unable to control the angry mob ... and the deeply shocked Gatting was jostled and bumped.

With missiles raining

### **Angry**

The rebel skipper had agreed to meet the anti-tour deputation during the tea interval.

Then he was persuaded to climb on to a podium to receive a protest letter.

Protest organiser Mohammed Cassimjee assured him: "You are guaranteed safe in, safe out. Nothing will happen.

"You will be given a memorandum relating to the lack of facilities in townships and general opposition to the tour."

But as Gatting walked to the podium with other rebel cricketers, the mood of the crowd grew angry.

*Full story - Page 2*

*(The Star - cover story)*

down on him, he raced desperately back to the safety of the ground.

The demo happened at Pietermaritzburg during the match against a South African invitation team.

## **Shocked**

He looked shocked at the deafening chants of "Gatting Go Home".

The violence erupted as he raced for the safety of the cricket ground.

The England side had been tipped off about trouble at the match.

Thousands of demonstrators swamped fields surrounding the ground.

And there was a massive police presence with helicopters, armored cars and water cannon.

But they kept their distance in an attempt to avoid provocation.

*(The Star - page 2)*

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Appendix F 1: Non participant observer comments**

#### **Evaluation of teaching**

of

MR. DIKUWA ALEXANDER

LECTURER OF ENGLISH

RUNDU COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

CLASS: Year 3 Students

SUBJECT: English

Topic: Critical Reading

LESSONS: 1 and 2

EVALUATION CONDUCT BY:

Ms. Judy Judge, English Education Officer

Kavango Regional Education Office, RUNDU

#### **LESSON 1**

STAGE 1 Intro of Objectives

-The teacher viewed the objectives of the lesson with the students – GOOD!

-An example on the board to illustrate the difference between a ‘sentence’ and a ‘phrase’ was needed.

- An approach by the lecturer is too teacher-directed. E.g. Teacher provided response to his own question of ‘what is Critical reading. Rather, allow students time to ‘figure it out’ for themselves, i.e. to apply their own critical thinking’ skills.

STAGE 2 Facts versus Opinion

-Suggestion: For a more learner-centred approach, students could work in groups to discuss and decide among themselves which examples were facts and which were opinions. Also, when taking up the handout, lecturer should invite students to read aloud the examples as opposed to teacher reading them all.

-Question to students of whether or not ‘what they believe’ would be considered factual. This was a good penetrating question which evoked their critical thinking. Good discussions ensued. Students’ enthusiasm and participation was notably increased.

-Observation: Majority of students were not taking notes. Independent note-taking is critical in the introduction of new concepts and especially so at the tertiary level. Please encourage students to develop that habit.

-During this stage, the teacher could/should have made better use of the chalkboard. Many students need the visual reinforcement and it would be more conducive to them taking notes.

-Observation: Teacher presence and usage of dictionaries in the classroom was missing. Dictionaries in English Language classroom are crucial at every level.

-Suggestion: Teacher should challenge and check for meaning/spelling of unfamiliar words more often. Again make use of chalkboard so that students can make note of new words.

-For critical reading, expansion of vocabulary is essential. Distinguish similar words according to simple parts of speech. Eg.: Ignore[verb]/Ignorance [adjective]/Ignorance [noun]. [Again use the board].

-Observation: After 35 minutes, students were becoming very restless; fidgeting in their seats and talking amongst themselves. This is commonly-observed behaviour whenever lessons are too teacher-directed.

-Following the discussion of categories of phrases, teacher provided a list of sample of pertinent words and phrases to the students. Suggestion: Rather, before distributing the list, have the students brainstorm examples based on the information/descriptions just discussed. Again, this is more learner-centred and causes them to think for themselves rather than being directly provided all the necessary goods.

Activity: Students worked in pairs to categorize the phrases on the list according to their function. This was a far better approach and learners were observed to have renewed energy and interest.

-During the paired activity, teacher circulated the room monitoring and assisting the students with the task. VERY GOOD.

-Re: Taking up the worksheet following the activity ... Again, far too teacher-directed and time consuming as well. The students' oral responses were given in a very noisy and disorderly

manner, with everyone talking at once, while the teacher attempted to be heard over them. This is an area that definitely needs improvement.

-Suggestion: For a more learner-centred approach ... Have students first compare their answers in groups. For those answers that differ amongst them, they would have to discuss and give reasons for their choices to the others in the group [thereby employing their critical reasoning skills]. Only those answers that remained in dispute would be addressed by the teacher. This is a more time efficient and more interesting approach to taking up long work.

-Suggestion: Also, when taking up work ... allow students more opportunities to read sentences/answers aloud rather than teacher always doing so. Students need as much practice in reading and speaking in class as time will allow.

-For Consolidation: Pose the question ... Up to now, what have you learned regarding the difference between opinion and fact? Recap.

### STAGE 3

-The analogy of an unfamiliar wrapped gift to introduce prediction was a brilliant idea. However there was so much more room for expansion with this. The question/exercise was too brief.

-In an ideal situation, a small prop of an ornately wrapped box could have been brought in and addressed with the 5 W+ How questions.

>Example of possible questions and responses as relate to a wrapped box prop:

\*WHAT do you think is inside the box? [Small things vs big, based on size of box]

\*Do you think it's expensive or cheap? [Expensive, based on the fancy wrapping. It could even be jewelry based on size and shape of box].

\*For WHOM is this gift intended? [teacher, based on who is in possession of it]

\*WHERE did the gift come from? [Maybe a colleague, since the teacher has it with him at work or maybe from a wife or girlfriend since the type of package looks like something from a loved one.]

\*WHEN did he receive it? [Very recently, since he has it with him and it is still unopened.]  
Etc. Etc. Etc. [Much fodder for prediction/critical thinking in this pro-based activity]

#### STAGE 4

-Activity: Students read a text then create a title.

This activity does not support the aim/discussion of evoking the students' curiosity and use of prediction. It is in fact, the reverse. Rather, ... begin by giving the title only and they must infer from it what the text might be about. This work especially well if there are also pictures attached to the handout or book.

-Activity: Students re-read the text [Men and women; Equal at Last] and either agree or disagree with its content. For take up of answers, those who agreed went to one side of room and those who disagreed to the other side of room. EXCELLENT; Physical movement; a change of approach and pace. Students recorded on chart paper their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing. EXCELLENT; learner-centred and an application of critical thinking. Suggestion: students should have been required to employ the new phrase they had just been studying, rather than being invited to do so. i.e. "You must employ" rather than "you can employ the new phrases". Practical application is crucial to reinforcement of understanding.

-Re: Taking up the group work [fact/opinions] ... The activity immediately reverted back to being teacher-directed again, thus becoming a long, tedious process for the students. Suggestion: Keep the learner-centred approach active. Let presenters from the groups present their chart and explain their choices to the class. Furthermore, the opinions simultaneously the process would be more interesting and more orderly. In the case at hand, learners called out their responses/opinions simultaneously and haphazardly. This does not itself well to hearing the final correct assessment nor to taking individual notes.

#### LESSON 2

-Teacher clarified objectives, giving attention to unfamiliar words ...GOOD. [To note: 'deconstruct' is synonymous with 'disassemble' or 'take apart', in the context of deconstructing a texts', but not synonymous with the word 'destroy'.]

Suggestion: As earlier suggested, dictionaries in the classroom are critical. Learners should not depend entirely on the teacher to define all unfamiliar words all the time. They must take more responsibility for their own learning, especially at this level. Looking definitions is a classic, easy way for them to do so.

-Re: Objectives ... There are too many varied objectives for this lesson, and some seem to veer away from the focus on Critical reading, moving more toward the skill of writing.

-Re: Making inferences from the title of the article ...EXCELLENT! Learners moved from predicting these before reading, to choosing which theme was best following the reading. Their choice was backed by evidentiary sentences from the text. This activity was learner-centred and required them to think critically. Only problem viewed here was the simultaneously shouting of the students during the plenary discussion.

-Activity: Students re-read the article and underlined the topic sentences, giving a new title to each individual paragraph. This helpful to students in understanding the content of a written text, hence it contributes to the development of critical thinking. GOOD.

Observation: Teacher posed the question: 'What is the sentence saying?' ... Students had trouble answering this, therefore the teacher kept repeating the question. Suggestion: Break the sentence down word by word and give them time to think about it. Otherwise, it's a case of 'Guess the answer that's in the teacher's head?' which is not thinking/reading critical. Again, oral participation was confused and disorderly here.

Also, students needed more direction in how to formulate the new titles for the paragraph. At this point, the students appeared tired and disinterested. To remedy that: Ensure the task is clear at the start, by doing more than one sample exercises together before they attempt it individually. Secondly, less listening to the teacher talk and more action/interaction with one another will renew their interest and energy.

-Re: Topic of Inferences: .. EXCELLENT TOPIC for critical reading.

-Activity: Answering Written Questions: The questions were excellent inference-based questions involving a lot of How's and Why's. Again, very conducive to the development of critical reading/thinking.

Suggestion: For clarification of questions, let students review the questions in pairs or small groups and the alert you to only those ones still bearing confusion. This, as opposed to teacher going through the list of each and every question with them. That is long, dull and unnecessary.

LESSON 2: COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE LESSON PLAN ITSELF, NOT ON OBSERVATIO OF TEACHING.

Since time constraints did not allow me to view all lessons in their entirety, I submit the following to you base on the intended activities and approaches as outlined in the lesson plan.

**Re: The section on ANALYZING THE ELEMENTS OF TEXT.**

Parts of this section [such as Paragraphs, Topic Sentences, Cause/Effect, Contrast, Comparison, Problem/Solution], in a general sense, would serve students well to know, in the development of their critical thinking and reading skills. However, those parts which tend more toward the writing process, with emphasis on grammar constructions, are much less student-friendly in the learning of critical reading. It is good for them to know and recognize the concepts of Contrast, Comparison and the like, however, better in content- based sense as opposed to a detailed grammatical sense. Too much emphasis on the mechanics of grammar in a text may overwhelm them and confuse rather than clarify the point. I understand the link the teacher is trying to make between language usage and elements of a text, but in this case the grammar points/strategies contained in the lesson plan are quite convoluted. Since students already struggle to come to terms with grammatical concepts, teaching critical reading via a focus on 'demonstratives' 'pronouns' 'conjunctions' 'paragraph links' etc. is bound to confound and confuse. These ideas are much more conducive to the writing process as opposed to teaching/learning critical reading.

- The questions which follow the section on EXPOSITORY TEXT STRUCTURE ask students to identify and underline demonstrative pronouns/synonyms/conjunctions and to indicate if verb tenses are consistent, for example. As explained above, these grammar points are a lesson in and

of itself, and demand an enormous amount of time and practice for learners to master. As it stands, there is still little mention or examples of these things in the information leading up to the questions so I fear students would have a very difficult time identifying them in the text.

-As the content of the lesson continues, 'OTHER STRATEGIES' are introduced. But again, I found myself asking 'Are these strategies for critical reading??' or are they strategies for 'How to structure an Argument' or How to Write an Argumentative Essay?'

**SUMMARY:**

- Lessons are meticulously planned and prepared for.
- Topics are interesting and practical.
- Teacher employs a logical progression in presentation of material.
- Teacher is active and enthusiastic.

**AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT:**

Learner-Centred Education

Classroom Management

Selection of Topics and Activities to meet the desired objectives.

**OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Teacher is encouraged to challenge the students' critical thinking more, especially in the context of teaching critical reading. They must put into practice the very theory that you propose. Teacher is also encourage to have students take greater responsibility for their own learning. [Eg. Dictionaries, Note Taking, Critical Thinking.]

This evaluation was conducted and the report compiled by:

\_\_\_\_\_

Ms. Judy Judge, English Education Officer

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

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## **Appendix F: Research participant comments**

### **Comments 1**

“The lessons really helped me a lot - something that will still help me in the future”

### **Comments 2**

Namibian: as my colleague have said, aah.....aahm...in this research in which I participated it really made me who I am, it changed me!!!

### **Comments 3**

Namibians: You know inferences like things that you think beyond literal meaning of the word. Yah, these are things we do every day when someone is speaking....eeh in the past I used to be like just take away as it is said without me going beyond what that person actually mean, thinking so it only? Helped but now I can be able to judge what the person is trying to mean, what somebody is talking to me, so it really helped me a lot. Something that will still help me in the future.

## APPENDIX G

### Appendix G 1: Focus group interview schedule

#### Research goals

To develop teaching materials

To find effective ways of teaching critical reading

To heighten self-awareness

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

##### A. Relationship between researcher and participants

1. In which way did the researcher help you learn?
2. In which way did the researcher not helpful to learning?
3. In which way would you describe the relationship between the researcher and male students, the researcher and the female students?
4. If you were the advisor to the researcher, what would be some of the important point you would raise or highlight with him?
5. In which way would you have wanted the researcher to handle incidences of misbehaviour?
6. What are some of the barriers to learning did you experience?

##### B. Effective way to teaching critical reading

1. How else could the lesson be presented?
  - Reading from notes
  - Reading the objectives
  - Homework
  - Explanations of difficult words
  - Teaching writing from reading
  - Going paragraph by paragraph – giving each paragraph a title.
  - Group work
2. In which way did you learn from critical reading lessons?
3. At the beginning of the lesson unit some students were of the opinion that I explain difficult words first. What might be the some of the reasons for their demand?
4. What helped students understand difficult words?
5. In which did the introduction of objectives help you in the lesson?

6. At which point in the lesson did you feel you are learning?
7. How did giving each paragraph a title help you understand the text?
8. Some students suggested that I give each group a paragraph to read. What might the motive for this request?
9. In which way could sitting arrangement help students learn better?
10. What did you like about the lessons or a particular lesson?

**C. Developing materials**

1. How did you find the teaching and learning materials?

- Difficult – challenging
- Interesting
- Useful

2. Which of the materials did you find to be more relevant and interesting?

Some activities did not have marks. How did you find those activities