Reading Difficulties Experienced by Grade 10 English Second Language Learners in Dutywa District, South Africa

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ABSTRACT This paper explores Grade 10 English Second Language learners' difficulties in reading in two selected schools in Dutywa District, South Africa. Synetic model was used to ground the paper, and quantitative case study design was used. Twenty- eight Grade 10 learners were purposefully selected. A test with a number of components/ sections was used to collect data with a memorandum of marking, and data was analysed manually. The findings are: in comprehension strategies, eighty-six percent passed, fourteen percent failed; in summary writing, twenty-one percent passed, seventy-nine percent failed; in visual literacy, thirty-six percent passed, sixty-four percent failed, dictionary and language skills reflected twenty-one percent passes and seventy-nine percent failures. The use of language integrating all test components had the following results: fifty percent passes and fifty percent failures. The paper recommends that teachers pay attention in teaching learners skimming and scanning, key wording to summarise main points and comprehend them.

INTRODUCTION

The paper explored Grade 10 English second language difficulties in reading as it serves as a gateway to future professionals in a variety of fields. The researchers found it important to explore and examine reading difficulties of Grade 10 (ESL) learners in selected senior secondary schools in one district in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. English second language (ESL) learners experience difficulties with their studies, which hinders academic achievement (de Klerk Walters cited by Kurt et al. (2002), Tella (2008) and Pandor (2008). Chan (2003) is of the view that the ability to use good reading strategies has a strong relationship with reading comprehension.

Culliford (2001) stated that fluent reading depends on the ability to respond to a text in a variety of ways and to find appropriate types of responses. Arsad et al. (2014) conducted a study of students'

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English language proficiency and its impact on the overall performance of a bachelor level engineering programme at a university in Malaysia. The findings showed that there appeared to be a direct correlation between students' results for fundamental subjects and the overall academic performance of graduating students. A similar study was conducted by Sadeghi et al. (2014) on the English language proficiency as a predictor of academic achievement among medical students in Iran. With strengthened reading strategies, learners can make greater progress and attain greater development in all academic areas. Reading is, therefore, an essential skill to master (Cekiso 2007). Some researchers (Pitt 1985 as quoted by Cekiso 2007) revealed that fundamental feature of academic under-performance in South Africa is poor reading. Can (2016) found out that good readers' successful achievement level is 64.8 percent while poor readers' achievement is 37.11 percent. Tebekana and Cishe (2015) asserted that irrespective of interventions by the Department of Basic Education, teachers and learners still struggle with reading.

The challenge of reading manifests itself when learners encounter problems in source reading (Cekiso 2007). There is a general outcry about learners who have poor reading skills in English, which cripples reading across curricula. Consequently, there is a blame game between further education and training and the general education and training

band, with teachers who are not doing enough to develop the learners' reading abilities (Cekiso 2007).

The problem of reading L2 is international. In Pakistan, English is a second language (L2) and demands a great deal of skills for learners to understand it. These skills are usually grouped as receptive skills, namely, reading and listening, whilst productive skills are speaking and writing. Sadeghi et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between learners' preferred language skills and preferred language learning material and their patterns of strategy use and found that students preferring different language skills used language and learning strategies in different ways. Findings also indicated that students learn language through different materials and employed different types of learning strategies.

Tajan et al. (2015) conducted a study on the effect of integrated listening activities on English as a foreign language for learners' speaking accuracy in Iran, within the framework of task-based activities in the hope of improving their competence. The results confirmed the strong effects of integrated technique compared to the traditional approach in teaching language skills to Iranian learners. On the other hand it has an incredible effect which could help the students to be motivated in learning correct English from high school or even lower levels. This suggests that teachers have to try and use integrated activities, skills and learning strategies

This background highlights that most second language learners (L2) experience difficulties with their learning because they lack proper reading skills and reading comprehension. Reading is one of the crucial components of the curriculum which needs to be considered very seriously (Griffiths 2015). Silva and Cain (2015) stated that their study on 4 to 6 year-olds had 2 aims. First, to determine how lower level comprehension skills (receptive vocabulary and grammar) support early higher level comprehension skills (inference and literary story comprehension), and second, to establish the predictive power of these skills on subsequent reading comprehension.

Clay (1992) pointed out that learners may struggle with learning to read for the following reasons; children differ from one another in intelligence, language, culture, and organic or psychological competences that interact with learning; some children do not achieve well in the classroom because they cannot get to grips with the setting and culture of classrooms, the teaching or task set to them. Tebe-

kana and Cishe (2015) discovered that the home environment of most learners from rural communities is not conducive to improved reading performance of learners due to lack of reading resources at home as most communities are poor, and there are financial constraints that make parents unable to buy reading resources. The quality of language input at school and home, including parents' lack of literacy knowledge and their illiteracy, lack of qualified teachers and overcrowded classrooms negatively affect the reading ability of learners (Lenyai and De Wit 2008).

The results of Cekiso (2016) in his paper on gender difference in reading comprehension indicates that English reading comprehension test favored girls. Similarly, as far as linguistic competence is concerned, boys' linguistic competence in L2 was poor as compared to the girls. Teachers should use simple language as they design their classroom tests and activities so as to cater for the boys (Cekiso 2016). Can (2016) suggested that the manner in which authors establish links in the text and how various ideas relate to each other should be shown in the text. Children should be provided with textual evaluation skills along with the criteria of textuality. Students should be engaged in vocabulary enrichment activities in order to assist them in comprehension.

Multiple and complex factors (both extrinsic and intrinsic) contribute to poor reading outcomes among second language (L2) learners. Researchers within the educational context of South Africa (Lenyai and De Wit 2008; Hugo and Nieman 2010) are particularly concerned about factors which place these learners at a high risk category for failure due to their poor reading and literacy skills. Several other language and linguistic factors also affect the process of acquiring adequate L2 reading skills, namely; an individual's reading proficiency in his or her first language (L1), the degree of overlap between the oral and written characteristics of the home language and acquired second language such as English (Soares et al. 2010). Other researchers have argued that cognitive linguistic skills may transfer from learners' first language to their second language, but they also propose that this 'transfer' depends on whether both languages are alphabetic, whether they are written from left to right or from right to left, whether the languages share orthographic elements and scripts, and whether they share

sounds and sound symbol correspondences (Soares et al. 2010; Chan 2003).

Lack of proper use of learners' reading strategies in English means that English second language learners experience difficulties with their studies which, in turn, hinders academic achievement. Chan (2003) is of the view that the ability to use good reading strategies has the strongest relationship with reading comprehension. This suggests that a variety of reading strategies need to be employed so that among these, learners can choose one or more strategies which best suit them so as to acquire reading skills (Mzimane and Mantlana 2017). Learners derive meaning from their engagement with script in a variety of different ways. Culliford (2001) stated that fluent reading depends on the ability to respond to a text in a variety of different ways and to find an appropriate type of response. Teachers have no reason to focus on only one strategy in teaching reading because not all learners will benefit and improve their love for reading if they use only one strategy (Griffiths 2015).

When one focuses on intrinsic and cognitive linguistic factors and how they relate to effective reading development, it is important to understand how the various components, for example, oral language, word reading, vocabulary and reading comprehension, come together and interact (Farnia and Geva 2013). Accordingly, we draw on a model of reading development that has received much attention in the reading research literature, namely, the Simple View of Reading (SVR) (Gough and Tunmer 1986; Hoover and Gough 1990). This model specifically emphasizes the role of the two main interacting pillars associated with reading comprehension, namely, language comprehension and those associated with world level reading skills, that is, word recognition and word decoding skill (Farnia and Geva 2013). Embedded in the SVR model is language comprehension which involves broader oral language processing skills such as vocabulary, verbal working memory, and morphosyntactic skills (Babayagist 2015).

It is stressed that leaners should be able to translate written into spoken language, understand the meaning or written words , and be aware of the morphological and syntactic processing of linguistic units. In this way, words become part of the working memory and will thus enable the development of effective reading comprehension (Babayagit 2015). The SVR model was further augmented by the inclusion of a cognitive linguistic aspect such as phonological awareness, working memory, syntactical and sematic awareness, orthographic skills and meta–cognitive reading strategies (Farnia and Geva 2013). Cognitive linguistic processes make significant contributions to reading comprehension over and above the two main pillars of the SVR model, namely, word level reading skills and language comprehension (Farnia and Geva 2013).

In general, poor reading skills lead to lower overall academic achievement, both in L1 and L2 (Chall 2000), and children who have difficulty with early literacy often continue to experience failure in later grades and later in life (Lipka and Seigel 2010). Arsad et al. (2014) stated that learners who have poor English language proficiency will have difficulty understanding the teacher, reading reference books and doing assignments in English. Consequently, many ESL learners are diagnosed as children with learning disabilities. Stanovich (1986) described this as the 'Matthewson Effect', that is, the phenomenon of the rich getting richer while the poor get poorer. In other words, those who acquire early literacy skills have the tools to grow exponentially in their knowledge and skills while those who fail to develop skills early fall increasingly further behind. With regard to the current paper, the above-mentioned underscores the importance of early identification of learners with reading challenges. In addition, researchers have highlighted the detrimental consequences of not providing effective support (Lipka and Siegel 2010). The consequences outlined above clearly demonstrated why it is imperative to identify L2 learners with reading difficulties as early as possible.

The ability to read with comprehension is essential for any part of the curriculum. Anderson (1990) outlined reading as the search for meaning and the active continuous attempt to comprehend that makes the process of reading work. What distinguishes more or less proficient reading is how efficiently and effectively clues of all sorts are used, how reading strategies are applied and meaning is attached. The psychological process of reading is all that goes on between the intake stimulus of the printed word and output of the reader's response in thought, speech, written words or actions. Aina et al. (2013) focused on the relationship between students' English language proficiency and their academic

performance in science and technical education. This paper concurs with the above researchers and sought to close this gap through the principle of conceptualisation to hinder reading difficulties and enhance academic achievement across the curriculum. This paper bridges this gap by motivating for positive attitudes and locus of control of learning styles. It closes the gap of inability of learners to make visualisations and predictions. Learners might be assisted to make connections between new knowledge and graphic organisers they can use to elicit thinking and discussion about themes related to text. During reading, learners might be asked to: re-read, restate, visualise and make text more comprehensible (Anderson 1990). This may enhance and develop English Cognitive and Language proficiency in order to cope with the genre across the curriculums.

This paper will contribute to the identification of reading difficulties which hinder academic achievement. Chan (2003) is of the view that the ability to use good reading strategies has the strongest relationship with reading comprehension. The researchers found it important to explore reading difficulties of grade ten (ESL) learners in selected senior secondary schools in order to improve reading across the genres. A considerable number of studies have revealed that English language proficiency is a strong predictor of academic success (Fakeye 2009; Adbirahman et al. 2013; Arsad et al. 2014)

The researchers' examination of reading difficulties is an effort to improve reading comprehension. The mastering of reading skill develops productive speaking which, in turn, leads to good writing skills. By identifying reading difficulties, this paper makes a difference by bringing into prominence the following outcomes: To improve teaching, learning and assessment, develop maximum vocabulary acquisition characterised by model based thinking tools. To bring about a generation of learners who are able to process information. It also condones reading that facilitates the process of learning with active and continuous attempts to comprehend and search for meaning. It also seeks to promote reading which facilitates vocabulary naturally as means of expressing understanding; it further seeks to develop teaching vocabulary (conceptualisation) that helps learners to acquire greater sophistication in their understanding of concepts and their understanding of language. This paper also attempts

to address the outcry on learners who have poor reading skills in English, which cripples reading across curricula. It will also reduce the blame game between Further Education and Training band and General Education and Training band teachers who are not doing enough to develop the learners' reading abilities (Cekiso 2007). Addow et al. (2013) pointed out that the knowledge of the contents of school subjects is communicated to the learners via the English medium.

The researchers regard reading as a thoughtful process that requires the reader not only to understand what the author is endeavouring but to contribute his/her experiences and understanding. Application of visualization, prediction, forming of opinions as well as connection to life experiences needs more attention on visual literacy (Madalambana 2015). It must make up a system that mirrors the connection among ideas, concepts and things. Vocabulary is used naturally and incidentally as a means of expression of understanding. The researchers encourage teaching vocabulary that helps learners to acquire greater application in their understanding of concepts and their understanding of language (Gunter et al. 2005). There is a relationship between a student's overall academic achievement in the content and their language proficiency (Fakeye 2009; Avdi 2011; Aina et al. 2013; Arsad et al. 2014).

Reading difficulties hinders reading comprehension across the curriculum. These difficulties also hinder teaching and learning, assessment, communication and economic growth. They further hinder learning which models problem-solving, improved co-operative learning, information processing and clinical competency which radiates several teaching models in classroom situation (Becker and Maunsaiyat 2002; Staden 2016).

The paper is significant not only to the teachers and learners but also to curriculum developers and educational planners. The finding of this paper as well as its recommendations may assist in improving matric results and averting dropout rates.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is grounded on the Synetic and vocabulary models of Gunter et al. (2005). The Synetic model is particularly effective for exploration, comparison, identification, insight and analogy. It uses interaction to create new insights

through the understanding together process. It is an operational theory, for the conscious use of the pre-conscious psychological mechanisms present in man's creative activity (Gunter et al. 2005). As an instructional model, the Synetic model is specifically designed to enhance creativity in problem solving by having students consciously developing analogies that allow for an emotional rather than rational approach to a solution.

Synetic model is relevant for this paper since it is an instructional model designed to activate student's creativity and help them see old ideas in new ways through employing various forms of metaphoric thinking to activate generative thinking. The Synetic model has the ability to awaken the creative thinker in every student through using guided techniques and activities (Gunter et al. 2005).

The researchers have also used the vocabulary model for language acquisition. This model rests on three principles (systems). Firstly, it considers language fundamentally as a tool for communicating on unfamiliar things in terms of related issues. Secondly, vocabulary is naturally and incidentally acquired (incidence) as means for expression of understanding. Thirdly, (conceptualization) teaching vocabulary helps learners to acquire greater sophistication in their understanding of concepts and their understanding of language (Gunter et al. 2005). Throughout the research process, the researchers were aiming to form a holistic view of the participants within their context by exploring their performance and scores of the tests.

On the basis of the above discussion, the Synetic model is deemed appropriate for this paper and may assist learners to develop insight and understanding on language acquisition.

Statement of the Problem

From the brief background of the paper, it has emerged that most second language (L2) learners experience difficulties with their learning because they lack proper reading skills and strategies. All those who are involved in the education of learners, be it parents, teachers, librarians, media specialists or subject advisors should be engaged in finding out which relevant reading skills should be used and which material may be provided to assist different learners in achieving their goals of becoming competent readers. The

whole issue towards reading improvement is based on the print-rich environment which can be used to stimulate a learner's desire to learn. Learners are unique in nature and as such, they need to be exposed to different language reading strategies. These are, to a greater extent, environmentally and developmentally influenced. If, for example, teachers focus more on one reading strategy, some learners will undoubtedly be disadvantaged. There is a view that less competent learners may improve their reading skills through training in reading strategies evidenced by more successful learners. All in all, maximizing support for shared activities between less skilled readers and more skilled readers encourages opportunities to learning and enjoyment of the task.

The above points illustrate that learners have to be exposed to a variety of reading skills and strategies so as to improve their reading proficiency, thereby having less reading difficulties.

Objective

This paper sought to explore Grade 10 English Second Language learners' difficulties in reading in Dutywa District in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. The paper was guided by the following research question: What difficulties do Grade 10 English Second Language learners experience in reading?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researchers used the quantitative research approach with a non-experimental mode of inquiry to examine relationship between issues without any direct manipulation of conditions experienced. A case study research design was used for this paper (McMillan and Schumacher 2006a). Case study was appropriate for this paper since it would potentially yield better understanding of the phenomenon explored with the intention of producing good instructional findings. Moreover, it is a flexible design to work with and refers to how well theory can be generated and tested using both inductive and deductive instruments of collecting data. The paper focuses on a few individual cases. (Reddy 2001; Walliman 2006), that is, it examined the reading difficulties in the case of the two selected schools.

Sample

The researchers used Grade 10 ESL learners in 2 senior secondary schools. The learners were of the same age range and from the same socio-economic background. The researchers used convenient sampling to select two senior secondary schools in Dutywa District in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), in convenience sampling, a group of subjects is selected based on accessibility; it was therefore convenient for the researchers to select two accessible schools. As previously mentioned, the researchers used ten percent of Grade 10 learners in each school; this made a total of twenty (20) learners from school A and eight (8) from school B, totaling to 28 learners.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to carry out the paper was obtained from the Provincial Department of Education, Dutywa District and from the principals of the two selected schools. Consent forms were issued to participants to document their consent to participate in the paper. Confidentiality, privacy was guaranteed by making sure that the data could not be traced back to a particular participant. Participants were neither required to write their names nor those of their schools; therefore, anonymity was maintained.

Data Collection Tools

The researchers used quantitative research in the form of tests to test reading skills of learners, and the test had 3 sections as indicated below:

Section A: **Test one** was administered based on comprehension skills with two passages which needed reading and answering of questions that followed (Adapted from "Who are you?" in Love Life's UNCUT Issue 24, May 3, 2005).

Section B: **Test two** was based on summary writing of an article extracted and adapted from a magazine (Adapted from "Who are you?" in love' UNCUT, Issue 24, May 3, 2005). It consisted of a paragraph of no more than 50 words focusing on three major challenges facing teenagers. Learners had to mention more than one challenge in a sentence, count the number of words used and write the total in brackets at the end of summary.

Section C: **This section was sub-divided into three test components. C1** was based on the language in context and required visual literacy. Learners had to read the passage and answer questions that followed**. C2** was based on dictionary and language skills. Learners had to read an extract from a dictionary and answer questions based on the entries. **C3** was based on the correct use of language which required the completion of the passage by filling in missing words. The first researcher administered the test in the learners' schools during class time with the permission of the principal and subject teachers.

Data Analysis

The tests, as indicated above, were marked by the first researcher and moderated by the Head of Department in each school, using a marking memorandum. The focus was on the marks obtained by the learners in each test and per the components of the test. The marks were converted into percentages. Data was analysed manually, and the results were synthesized so as to give a clear overall picture of the performance of the learners per test and per component.

RESULTS

As indicated above, learners were tested on reading skills as per the components indicated below:

Comprehension

The learners performed very well in this section; out 28 learners who wrote the test, only 4 failed the comprehension tests, meaning 24 learners passed (86%) and (14%) failed.

Summary Writing

Learners performed poorly in this section. Only seven (7) learners passed (25%) and twenty one (21) failed, the latter translating into a seventy-five percent failure rate.

Visual Literacy

Learners performed better than they did in Section B, with ten (10) learners who passed (36%) and eighteen (18) who failed, thus totalling to sixty-four percent (64%).

Dictionary and Diary Entries

Learners also performed poorly in this section; only six learners managed to pass (21%) and twenty-two learners failed (79%).

Using Language Correctly

Fourteen (14) learners passed in this section (50%) and fourteen (14) failed (50%). This can be considered as average performance. The best performance was in comprehension while the poorest performance was in dictionary and diary entries. Out of twenty-eight (28) learners who participated in the comprehension test, twenty-four passed (86%) with four failures (14%). For summary writing, only seven learners (25% passed and twenty-one failed (75 %). For visual literacy, ten passed (36%) and twenty-two failed (64%). For dictionary and diary entries, six passed (21%) and twenty-two (79) failed. For the correct language use, fourteen learners passed (50%), and another fourteen failed (50%). In order to overcome reading difficulties, all these components are important and require equal attention in order to improve competence in English as second language.

DISCUSSION

It emerged from the main findings that the difficulties in reading do not only give challenges to English language proficiency but also across all subjects, since English is used as the language of teaching, learning, assessment, communication and economic growth. For effective reading and maximum vocabulary acquisition, learners should model learning-based thinking tools, learning and practising problem-solving models, improved co-operative learning, information processing model as well as clinical competency, thereby radiating several models in the classroom regardless of natural style. Five components of tests were examined, and meaning was extracted. Understanding of reading difficulties was examined; experience was extended and strength was added to what was already known through previous research. A detailed contextual analysis of reading difficulties from the five tests focusing on the two schools was emphasized. The main findings of the paper are discussed in themes as per the tests written by learn-

ers. Altogether, 28 learners were tested in the areas as discussed below.

Comprehension

Both schools performed very well, and 24 learners (86%) passed. This concurs with the work of Anderson (1990) who describes reading as the search for meaning and the active continuous attempt to comprehend that which makes reading a process of learning. In conceptualization, learners must be assisted to move to a greater sophistication in their understanding of concepts and the understanding of language. This paper condones reading that facilitates the process of learning when there is an active and continuous attempt to comprehend and search for meaning. The paper also condones the need for guidance of the learners to identify words, determine strategies as well as selection of texts from many sources (Incidence).

In Katim's (1997) strategy of key wording, learners are able to identify words that guide the reader to determine the organisation strategy and content focus of the written text as well as selection of text from many sources. Online reading strategies are helpful in that key wording plays a major role in finding appropriate information in the text; this is necessary for successful reading comprehension using two basic tools, skimming and scanning (Rosenberg 2007). The researchers also agree with the re-reading strategy as a useful pedagogical tool with the potential benefit of enhancing the reader's comprehension as well as enjoyment of literature. Key wording is another tool that is useful in improving students' ability to comprehend (Faust and Glenzer 2000). Cekiso (2007) suggested that teachers need to develop effective instructional means of reading comprehension and strategy use. Learning a new language enhances and enriches a child's mental development and has positive effects on his/her intellectual growth (Conceptualization).

Researchers regard reading as a thoughtful process that requires the reader not only to understand what the author is endeavouring to communicate but to contribute his/her own experiences and thoughts to problem solving and understanding. On the comprehension test, the performance showed clearly that after reading, the learners comprehended and attached meaning. They also were able to answer questions based on reading from the comprehension. This con-

curs well with Katim's (1997) strategy of key wording whereby learners shown an ability to identify words that guide the reader to determine the organisation strategy and content focus of the written text as well as selection of text from many sources. Therefore, scanning and skimming skills were applied effectively. This means that it needs to be monitored and enhanced for maximum efficiency and effective implementation across every genre. This may enhance academic performance and improve the quality of results of all subjects.

Comprehension needs monitoring and application of skimming and scanning (Systems) and key wording emphasis. Can (2016) suggested that learners' awareness of cohesive elements in the text should be enhanced in reading processes. In particular, learners with low-level reading comprehension skills should make more time to read, and their reading comprehension skills should be enhanced by comparing various types of texts.

Summary Writing

More emphasis, support and development of summary strategy is needed since there were very few (7) learners (25%) who managed to pass in this strategy. Scanning and skimming as well as key wording are components that need continuity and balance. This concurs well with Lucantoni et al. (2001) that people who use a second language need to acquire four main skills, namely: reading, listening and productive skills (speaking and writing). This may also be eliminated by means of a reading programme based on the use of highly illustrated books of high interest stories. Reading needs to be mastered before attention is paid to other aspects. Learning a new language enhances and enriches a child's mental development and has positive effects on his/her intellectual growth.

Summary writing needs developing reading attitudes. The findings of this paper concur with Griffiths (2015) who delineated attitudes as mediators and moderators of achievement rather than a corollary. Enhancement of attitudes towards reading has been focused on the improvement of attitudes towards reading genre and environment as well as the improvement of overall reading across genres and environments as well as the improvement of overall abilities of students. Negative attitudes towards reading also have an impact on a students' motivation and attention.

Therefore, motivation and positive attitudes need to be encouraged to seek opportunities to read, thus leading to higher levels of motivation and a greater sense of self-esteem.

Instructional activities positively influence attitudes towards reading and facilitate high levels of achievement (Staden 2016). As a result, students become more proficient in reading fluency and comprehension, vocabulary and cognitive development. As students practice reading, they acquire fluency and realize the rewards of their efforts; therefore, educators must take cognizance of attitudes in relation to reading. Key wording skills needs to be emphasized, so the principle of conceptualisation needs to be applied effectively.

The performance in summary skills in this paper has indicated that the four main skills have not been mastered. The learners showed poor skimming and scanning skills as well as key wording and need continuous practice of the two skills in order to improve. Therefore, skimming, scanning and breaking up the text need to be introduced to develop and confirm the reader's understanding further. The teacher and the learners must practice English so as to model ways of using vocabulary, explaining, classifying, comparing, exemplifying, questioning and pronouncing words (Anderson 1990).

Visual Literacy

Learners performed better in visual literacy than in summary writing even though only ten (10) learners passed (36%). This finding corroborates findings of Westraadt (2016) who reported that visual literacy proves to be a problem for many learners. Clarification strategy needs to be employed in order to make the meaning of the text clear to readers. It is also the reader's task to ask questions, re-read or restate, visualise and make text more comprehensible. There is also a need to explore strategies which encourage readers to form opinions, make judgements and develop ideas from reading (Anderson 1990). The learners experienced difficulties in making predictions and visualisation. According to Katim (1997), visualisation and connection of the text to life experiences are the difficulties experienced by learners in any text and subject. They should be taught to recognise and visualise text when they are reading to be informed, when they are reading for literary experience, and reading to perform a task;

they must be helped to name, select and apply skills appropriate for each intent.

Learners need to be assisted to overcome reading difficulties by evaluation of existing strategies (Anderson 1990), for example create evaluative questions that will lead learners to make generalisation and critically evaluate text. This may be applied during and after reading. Clarification techniques need to be employed in order to make meaning of the text clear to readers. It is also the reader's task to ask questions, re-read and visualise the text more comprehensibly.

The role of visual literacy in spelling of words should not be underestimated, especially in the light of modern visual digital learning (Smith 2015). Vocabulary is naturally and incidentally a means of expression of understanding. To spell with flair eases the task of producing those spelling words as part of vocabulary. Core words are identified and taught. These words are introduced in context, which make the exercise more meaningful, and then they are isolated and taught. These core words also involve visual skills as the learner needs a visual impression of words (Smith 2015). Application of visualisation, prediction forming of opinions as well as connection of the text to life experiences needs more attention on visual literacy (incidence) (Anderson 1990).

Dictionary and Language Skills

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of learners failed under this category. This was another section that showed poor performance with only six learners (21%) who managed to pass. Teaching new and important words for reading comprehension is necessary. This activity may enhance the acquisition of new vocabulary or terminology to understand the text before tackling reading. Vocabulary items need to be categorised as those which can or cannot be guessed from the context and deemed essential or less important in the understanding of the text. By introducing and explaining the above language features of the text, the students are able to expand and relate their current knowledge and gain new knowledge of the game**.** These finding are in line with Carrel (1991) who maintained that setting the purpose of a reading strategy aims at learning new information, learning vocabulary in order to get an overall idea of the text and to help the students to acquire strategies to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary.

Using Language Correctly

Fourteen (14) learners passed in this section (50%). Therefore, there was average performance. This part needs to be mastered as it combines all the above aspects to make reading complete. Katim (1997) viewed reading strategies as techniques that enable learners to solve problems and complete tasks independently, so mastering all these aspects integratively may assist learners to overcome reading difficulties. This paper concurs with Katim (1997) that the contribution of language proficiency can be thought of as a gradual increase in skills related to the ability to comprehend and express oneself in the ESL, both orally and in everyday contexts and in academic contexts. A variety of receptive and expressive skills need to be developed. These must include familiarity with phonology of ESL, its vocabulary (both in everyday vocabulary and academic vocabulary) its morphology and grammar (conceptualisation).

CONCLUSION

This paper explored reading difficulties experienced by English second language learners as the language of learning, teaching, assessment, communication and economic growth. The results correspond with the results of previous research indicated above, proving that the research was not alien in this field; rather, it has contributed in the area by adding to the debate of reading difficulties experienced by grade 10 English Second Language learners.

As a matter of comprehension, reading might be a process of active and continuous attempt to comprehend and search for meaning. The main findings of the paper were that comprehension skills and post reading skills need to be monitored and supported for maximum efficiency and effectiveness as learners have shown good performance in comprehension. Question and answer, dictionary and summary writing needs more effort and emphasis, particularly at the post-reading stage as learners have shown poor levels of achievement here.

To overcome reading difficulties, teachers and learners need to explore reading strategies that may assist in reading. Those who may overcome these difficulties are those whose mother tongue is English. Reading difficulties cannot be attrib-

uted to skills but to a multitude of factors and vary from one individual to another. The paper, thus, has added more literature to the debate of reading difficulties experienced by grade 10 English Second Language learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As per the findings in the paper, it is recommended that in order to overcome some of the learners' reading difficulties, more emphasis should be placed on summary writing, visual literacy, dictionary and diary entries. However, in order to overcome reading difficulties, all components, as indicated on the findings above, are important and require attention in order to improve competence in English as a second language.

For further research, it is recommended that a research may be conducted in other districts focusing of the extent of the reading difficulties in different circumstances. This paper does not encompass every skill to be overcome regarding reading difficulties in English second language; therefore, some research may be conducted to explore other reading skills.

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