

An Exploration of Reading Strategies Employed by Grade 12 learners in Modjadji Circuit, Limpopo Province

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Abstract

The significance of getting learners to read English First Additional Language (EFAL) cannot be ignored. This language is very significant as it is used for teaching and learning across the curriculum. Despite different studies that have been conducted, learners still experience barriers in reading English text. The purpose of this study was to explore the reading strategies employed by grade 12 learners in schools under Modjadji Circuit, Limpopo Province and to develop intervention reading strategies. The study addressed the issue of reading strategies for grade 12 learners employ in addressing barriers which impede them to read English texts in EFAL. A qualitative interpretative case study design was adopted for this study. Participants were purposively selected comprising of 12 grade 12 learners, 3 EFAL teachers from the selected secondary schools in Modjadji Circuit, Limpopo Province. Data were collected using interviews, observation, and documents analysis. Data were thematically analysed. The results showed that grade 12 learners and teachers employ various reading strategies during reading. But this is at a limited nature and this lack of an exposure to various reading strategies often leads to failure in comprehending complex texts in EFAL and other subjects. The knowledge and usage of various reading strategies will enhance learning in Grade 12, and therefore improve performance in other subjects The study recommends that learners should be exposed to different comprehension strategies, which will enhance their learning and usage of different reading strategies. Teachers should also employ different reading strategies when teaching learners. The use of different reading strategies had a positive effect on the learners reading comprehension.

Key words: English First Additional Language, reading strategies, Reading comprehension and Modjadji.

Introduction

The ability to read texts in English First Additional Language (EFAL) is viewed as a cornerstone of learning. English First Additional Language is used in South Africa, both in schools and higher institutions for teaching and learning. Chaka (2015) outlined the importance of EFAL as he mentioned that “it serves as Lingua Franca for learners speaking different languages” The literature also showed that learners use English First Additional language across the curriculum for academic purpose (Modipane, 2018; Desi, 2021). Even though the significant of reading in EFAL is outlined, learners still struggle to read in the said language. Molotja and Themane (2018:1) ascertained as they declare that “the problem of not being able

to read transcends negatively on the learner's academic achievements". The concern of learners who cannot read competently is ascertained by other research outlining that South African learners have a reading predicament (Spaull, 2016; Rule & Land, 2017 and Willenberg, 2018). To address this predicament, different studies have been conducted with the purpose of identifying factors contributing to the challenge of learners not being to read in EFAL (Donald & Condy, 2003; Spaull, 2016; Rule & Land, 2017 and Willenberg, 2018). Thus, the current study seeks to address the predicament faced by the learners during the reading of EFAL

Previous studies also showed that reading interventions are mounted at different intervals, not only in South Africa (Donald & Condy, 2003). A study conducted by Cekiso (2017) indicates that there is a consensus that new way of teaching reading is needed to improve the reading ability of learners. There is, therefore, a need for the researcher to explore more on the existence of the problems. This current study seeks to explore the reading strategy employed by grade 12 learners of Modjadji Circuit, Limpopo Province: Towards developing intervention reading strategies.

Banditvilai (2020) outlined reading strategies as a means that influence readers, in adjusting their reading behaviour to work on text difficulty, task demands and other contextual variables. It is through reading strategies that teachers assist learners to improve their reading comprehension (Banditvilai, 2020).

It is therefore imperative that learners employ reading strategies during the reading of EFAL and teachers develop intervention reading strategies to enhance the learners reading ability. In arguing the significant of reading strategies, Molotja and Themane (2018) view reading strategies as techniques that improves learner's progress in comprehending, internalising, and using second language.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory assist to underpin this study. This theory tries to explain socialization and its influence on development of self (Crossman, 2019). An individual learns through interactions with other people. Hosburg and Ippolito (2018:156) and Bandura (1977) explained that with social learning theory, individual learns through observational learning and modelling. Additionally, Bandura outlined that individuals are social beings that are surrounded by many models. Learners as social being are surrounded by different stakeholders. They interact with parents at home, teachers and peers at school and at home. They learn from the people who surround them and get much influence from them. Parents who always read to their children at home instill the love for reading in them. Learners also observe from their teachers during reading periods how to pronounce EFAL words. Bandura (1977) found that individuals absorb what they pay attention to and remember it. In this study, the learners internalize how they have seen their teachers and peers reading and recall the information.

Problem Statement

Even though different studies were conducted, learners continue to struggle to read English texts in EFAL. Different studies indicated that learners experience challenges that impede them to read English texts in EFAL. For example, Sebetoa (2016:2) found that learners in Nigeria, Kenya and Saudi Arabia experience difficulty in reading English texts. Other researchers also view EAL reading as a worldwide challenge (Lumadi,2016; Swanepoel ,2017; Modipane, 2018). Other researchers identified problems that impede learners to read English

texts such as Contextual barrier (Phatudi & Motila, 2014; Caddy, 2015; Perking, 2015).and Socio-economic status (Nel, 2015; Modipane, 2018). Previous researchers conducted studies outlining reading barriers and reading studies. Thus, the current study seeks to explore the reading strategies employed by grade 12 learners so as to improve their implementation during the teaching of reading in the classroom.

Research Question

The study addressed the following:

The main Question

Which reading strategies do grade 12 learners employ in addressing barriers that impede them to read English texts in English First Additional Language?

Sub-Questions

- What challenges do grade 12 learners experience when reading English texts?
- Why are learners in grade 12 struggle to read in EFAL?
- How can the reading of EFAL texts in EFAL be enhanced?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore reading strategies employed by grade 12 EFAL learners in Modjadji Circuit in Limpopo Province, and to develop intervention reading strategies in EFAL.

Literature Review

Reading and Reading strategies

Reading is viewed as important skill which is developed through teaching and learning. It is significant in current society and is vital for learning in schools and beyond (Madikiza, Cekiso, Tshotsho & Landa, 2018). Teachers should teach reading through the use of reading strategies. Reading strategies are of very significant during the reading of EFAL as they enable learners to comprehend what they have read (Banditvilai, 2020). He further asserts that reading strategies equip learners with the skills of how to handle their reading proficiently. Beddle (2018:5) advised that all readers require the use of reading strategies when faced with difficult text.

Activating background knowledge strategy

Background knowledge is the prior- knowledge of the learners' world and cultural knowledge (Banditvilai, 2020). When learners attend class during reading, they go with the knowledge which they have acquired outside the class. It is always important that it be activated as it helps them to learn the new knowledge of teaching and learning in the classroom. Activating background knowledge assist to stimulate more information from the learner a new information from the learner (Klapwijk, 2015).

Inferring Strategy

Inferring strategy play a critical role during reading. It assists learners to use their background knowledge to guess about what they don't know. Win and Mar (2020:43) defined inferring as reading between lines. Learners use combination of their own knowledge and clues to read and understand the word they are not familiar with. Learners are able to

overcome vocabulary problem and also to read between lines through the use of inferring. Morrison, Wilcox, Bird, Murdoch, Bursey and Helvey (2020: 421) view the ability to draw inferences as the cornerstone of reading comprehension. Morrison et al. (ibid) additionally, outlined the significant of inferencing as development of the mental framework of what learners have read.

Monitoring –Clarifying Strategy

Learners can monitor their own understanding through the use of monitoring – clarifying strategy. Teachers should use this strategy when they teach learners reading, as it enables the learners to participate and monitor their progress (Klapwijk, 2015).

Questioning Strategy

Questioning is a very important strategy that assist learners to distinguish between questions that are factual or based on their prior knowledge (Win & Mar, 2020). Learners are never passive when they use this strategy, it engages them with the text. During reading, learners frequently return to the text to find answers asked by their teachers before, during and after reading (Win & Mar, 2020; Banditvilai, 2020). Amalia (2016) maintains that asking good question is away for learners to monitor their own comprehension while reading.

Summarizing

Summarizing plays essential role to both learners and teachers. It enhances the learner's memory as they are able to focus on the main ideas and phrases of the given text. Learners can recognize how ideas relate and text are arranged. Summarizing is a skill which assist learners to identify important elements of a passage (Stevens, Park & Vaughn, 2019).

Ahmad and Sriyando (2021: 255) outline summarizing as essential in assisting learners to understand what is being read. They further explained it as an activity that requires learners to understand, analyze and synthesize ideas. The study conducted by Nurhayandi and Fitriana (2018) acknowledged that summarizing enhances reading comprehension. Their study further showed that it also improves the reading ability of foreign language learners. Stevens, Park and Vaughn (2019:132) viewed summarizing as effective instructional practices for improving learner's literacy. Lumadi (2016:17) maintains that summarizing assists the teachers to identify learners who cannot read.

Guessing at the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Teachers should never ignore the use of this strategy. Through it learners use words such as roots, prefixes and suffixes to determine the meaning of words which they are not familiar with. Learners guess unknown words based on the information in the word and in the text (Mauping & Sihombing, 2019).

Extensive reading

This strategy encourages learners to read, as they select books of their own choice. Learners read plenty books. They are not bored as they read the books they loved. The more they read the more they are trained to be fluent. Stoller (2015:152) posits that permitting learners choices in what they read empowers them and leads to more learner commitment in reading. He further explained that the best way to assist learners to read and improve reading skills is through reading itself. Sandon (2017:113) agree with Stoller (ibid) as he allude that reading is learned through reading. The more they pick up items of vocabulary and grammar from the texts often without realizing it (Shelly, 2015). Additionally, this strategy motivates learners to read more, and it increases their fluency.

Peer-assisted strategy

This is a strategy where one learner assists the other learner. There are learners who can read fluently, such learners are able to assist those who struggle to read well.

During the use of peer-assisted strategy, skilled readers are paired with unskilled ones, so that they can cooperatively participate in various reading activities that are designed to improve their reading skills. Struggling learners understand their peers they play with better than their teacher. Almutairi (2018:50) ascertain as he alludes that peer-Assisted strategy are helpful to learners who struggle to read.

Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR)

When learners employ CSR strategy, it is vital that they are guided by their teachers. Teachers should play a role of encouraging collaboration. They guide and support learners to read more effectively (Boardman, Klinger, Buckley, Annammara & Lasser 2015). Each learner is given a role to use before, during and after reading strategy (Boardman et al., 2015). Teachers guide learners before reading to activate their background knowledge. Additionally, Boardman (ibid) maintains that they assist and guide learners to present topics and vocabulary concepts to connect them with their background knowledge and set the purpose for reading.

Methodology

Design

This article present research conducted in public schools based in rural area of Modjadji Circuit, Limpopo Province. The study followed qualitative approach. This approach is concerned with the participants' perspectives and experiences (Best & Kahn 2006, Slavin, 2007). Additionally, qualitative research generates a wealth and depth of detailed information about a limited number of people (Denzil & Lincoln, 2005). The study also followed a case study design. It was followed as its knowledge is more real, more appropriate, and more developed by reader interpretation than other techniques (Meriam, 2009). Additionally, it was selected as it enables the researcher to conduct an in-depth exploration of intricate phenomenon within some specific contexts (Rashidi, Ammar, Rashidi, Muhammad, Sabir & Waseem, 2019). Interpretive case study was followed. Chetty (2013:40) maintains that interpretive case study motivates a researcher to be the main data collection tool as it enhances consistency of data collections.

Participants

The sample for the study consisted of 12 grade 12 learners. They were sampled considering their gender, that is 6 males and 6 females who were purposively selected from 1 public school. Their age was between 16 and 19. Foley (2018) outlines purposive sampling as a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgement when selecting members of the population to participate in the study. The Participants were selected on the ground that they are the ones known to be relevant to the topic explored. Berg (2014: 52) outlined that purposive sampling is developed when researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select the subjects who represent the population.

Data collection and instrumentation

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the learners. It was used to allow the researcher to probe research participants for further clarification of answers. Observation and document analysis were also used as data collection tools to attain perceptions, assumptions, and opinions of learners. Observations offered the researcher opportunity to observe learners employ reading strategies in the classroom to get believable results. Lumadi (2016:9) defines

observation as a construction of a picture of what occurs in the classroom practice. Various documents such as school policies, reading policies and school timetable were collected. The intention was to check if they provide learners opportunity to conduct reading campaigns in schools.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used in analyzing data. Data collected were transcribed and summarized into themes and patterns to confirm the dependability of the study. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data (Braun & Clark, 2019).

Findings and Discussions

The results showed that grade 12 learners and teachers employ various reading strategies during reading. But this is at a limited nature and this lack of an exposure to various reading strategies often leads to failure in comprehending complex texts in EFAL and other subjects. The knowledge and usage of various reading strategies will enhance learning in Grade 12, and therefore improve performance in other subjects. The use of reading strategies is a must, and should never be ignored when teaching reading. Previous study conducted by Cahoon (2008) also encourage the use of reading strategies as he alludes that, "the use of reading strategy is viewed as an effective way to help learners improve their comprehension content". In his study, Beddle (2017:19) outlines that "researchers concluded that reading strategies have a positive impact on learners performance. Current and previous studies have found a strong association between reading strategy instruction and reading comprehension improvement. Learners should be taught reading strategies in language classrooms during reading.

Activation of background knowledge

Findings that emerged from the current study on the use of background knowledge, showed that activation of background knowledge play a significant role during reading. It is through it that learners can learn the new topic. It also links the learners' existing knowledge with the new knowledge learned. Previous studies also agree that activating previous language is essential. A study conducted by Klapwijk (2015:5) indicates that new knowledge is learnt best when linked to existing knowledge. A study of Erten and Razi (2009:61) also ascertains as they explain that "when readers bring relevant background knowledge to the reading process, they can allocate more attentional space for textual analysis and interpretation. The use of background knowledge elicits much information from learners about the topic discussed.

Inferring reading strategies

Findings showed that learners use inferring strategy and it enable them to guess the information using contextual clues to fill incomplete information. Learners use context clues to guess the answer. Findings on current study also revealed that inferring improves the learners reading skills and is viewed as very essential during reading. Previous study ascertain as they outline inferring as the cornerstone of reading comprehension (Morisson, Wilcox Bird, Murdoch, Burse & Helveg, 2020). McNamara (2014: 34) views the ability to draw inference as a key factor that distinguishes skilled readers from less proficient readers

Summarization reading strategy

The findings that emerged from summarizing showed that most learners are able to summarize the text, as 9 learners out of 12 were able to summarize and only 3 were unable to summarize. Current study showed that summarizing is important, and it enables the

learners to identify the key points from the given text and to distinguish essential information from unnecessary information. The current study is in line with the study conducted by Stevens, Park and Vaughn (2019:132) which agree that with summarization, learners should delete trivial and redundant information, distinguish important information from unnecessary details.

Does summarizing improve learners comprehension and reading skills?

Findings showed that summarizing improves learners 'comprehension and reading skills. Learners can read with concentration as they identify the key ideas. Current study indicates that reading repeatedly, with focus and concentration as they single main ideas from supporting ideas, helps to improve their comprehension and their reading ability.

This is in line with the study conducted by Stevens et al. (2019: 133), who assert that understanding the effects of summarizing and main idea intervention provide insight on ways to strengthen the reading comprehension components of multicomponent intervention.

The importance of inferring during reading strategies

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The ability to summarize what learners have read after reading

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Learners summarizing what they have read

The current study revealed that learners have various way of summarizing a given paragraph. Most learners write the main ideas with their own words, not changing the message in the paragraph. Previous study conducted by Win and Mar (2020:45) explained summarizing as the process where the reader writes what is important when reading and condense the information in the readers 'own words. Another previous study conducted by Jones (2012) outlined summarizing as taking larger selection of text and reduce them to key ideas.

Summarizing assist learners to improve their comprehension and reading skills

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by Win and Mar (2020:45) outline that summarizing improves the learners way of organizing the ideas even in the long reading passages which are viewed as threat for the learners.

The significant of Questioning Reading strategy during reading in the classroom

The current study has found that questioning assist learners to monitor their understanding during reading. The study conducted by Amalia and Devanti (2016) indicated that asking learners good questions it assist them to monitor their own comprehension while reading. Learners are never passive nor sleep during reading as they ask themselves questions to get answers about what they are reading. They are active throughout the reading process as they ask themselves questions before, during and after reading. The findings Concur with the findings conducted by Banditvilai (2020:46).

The importance of monitoring learners reading comprehensions skills

The study has found that learner employ monitoring and it enable them to determine what they understand and what they have not understand as they read. Previous study conducted by Klapwijk (2015:6) indicated that during reading monitoring present an opportunity for teachers to study their learners carefully and learn more about their reading behaviour and problems. The researcher views this as very important as the struggling readers will be offered special individual attention.

Conclusion

The study sought to explore the reading strategies employed by grade 12 learners in Modjadji Circuit, Limpopo Province. The result showed that learners and teachers employ different reading strategies. This study played a significant role in revealing that the use of various reading strategies improves the learners reading ability. The author felt that the outcome encourages and recommend that English First Additional Language teachers and learners should always employ reading strategies during reading.

Recommendations

Recommendations for teachers

It is recommended that teachers employ different reading strategies when teaching learners reading in class. They should also guide learners on how to summarize a paragraph.

Recommendations for Learners

Learners should be encouraged to use different reading strategies such as activating background knowledge, summarizing, Prediction, inferring, guessing of unfamiliar words Questioning, monitoring, and clarifying to assist them comprehend what they read and also enhance their reading skills. They should also use dictionary as they read so that it guides them how to pronounce some difficult words. It is recommended that policy makers include in their policy guidance to the teachers on how to employ reading strategies in class and encourage them to implement them every time they teach reading.

The school timetable should make provision for reading periods, even if this means a double period once a week. This will train learners to be fluent in reading as majority of them are unable to read fluently. Allocated periods will offer learners an opportunity to participate in reading.

The Department of Education should make it a norm to all schools to participate in reading competitions. This will encourage teachers to train their learners to read properly.

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