

**AN INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS HAMPERING GRADE 5 LEARNERS'
READING WITH COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE
IN THE OSHANA REGION**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to investigate factors hampering grade 5 learners' reading comprehension in English Second Language in the Oshana Region. The study employed mixed methods of both qualitative and quantitative research designs. The study also used a triangulation procedure during data collection. A simple random sampling procedure was used to select 40 schools from 88 schools with grade 5, 25 teachers and 60 learners from selected schools. A criterion purposeful sampling technique was used to identify 30 learners from the selected 60 learners to participate in the focused group interviews. The questionnaire, classroom observation checklist, reading comprehension test and focused group interview were used to collect data. The main findings of the study were that learners had reading comprehension difficulties due to, amongst other things, language problems, inability to read and understand difficult English words, reading without understanding and lack of exposure to reading in English. The study also found that 'reading the passage silently and answering the questions' was the most dominant teaching method used by the grade 5 English teachers to teach reading comprehension in the Oshana Region. Finally, the study concluded that learners were not exposed to a variety of reading materials in ESL. The study therefore recommends professional development training in teaching strategies on reading comprehension for grade 5 English teachers.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late father Abner Amwaalwa Kapolo and my late mother Bertha Ndalelwa Jonas for their understanding and commitment to send me to school at an early age which made it possible for me to become the person I am today.

DECLARATION

I, Hilma Shapaka, declare hereby that this study on “**an investigation of factors hampering grade 5 learners’ reading with comprehension in English Second Language in the Oshana Region**” is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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ACRONYMS

BIS- Basic Information Science

DNEA- Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment

ESL- English Second Language

NIED- National Institute for Educational Development

OTRC- Ongwediva Teachers' Resource Centre

SACMEQ- Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

SPGS- School of Post Graduate studies

WM- working Memory

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study, gives the orientation of the study and the statement of the problem. It provides the research questions that originated from the statement of the problem. Lastly, the chapter outlines the significance of the study, the limitation and delimitation of the study, and defines key terms of the study.

1.1 Orientation of the study

Comprehension is the overall purpose of reading (Scanlon, Anderson & Sweeney, 2010; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011) and it is vital for successful reading. Lipka and Siegel (2011) also stated that comprehension is the final goal of reading and failure to comprehend can lead to school failures. They further explained that comprehension draws on different language skills including lower-level lexical skills (e.g. word reading efficiency and vocabulary knowledge), sentence-level skills (e.g. knowledge of grammatical structure) and higher-level text processing skills (e.g. inference, generating questions and comprehension monitoring). Du toit, Heese and Orr (2009) also added that comprehension requires careful, thoughtful and thorough reading of the text in order for the reader to get meaning.

Schunk (2009) identified two levels of comprehension: basic level comprehension, in which the reader accesses meaning by decoding words, and high level

comprehension, in which the reader goes beyond the literal meaning of the text and engages in mental activities such as drawing inferences, deciding on main ideas, inferring the writer's purpose and predicting what will happen in the text. Comprehension involves responding to, interpreting, analysing and evaluating the texts. This means that when learners understand what they are reading, they interpret, integrate, critique, infer, analyse and evaluate the ideas in the text to get to the meaning of the text. Caccamise and Snyder (2005) emphasised the fact that comprehension is an active process that takes place between the reader and a text, and it is both intentional and thoughtful. Learners should be able to interact with the text and should engage in deliberate actions in order to understand written texts. However, the question still remains why some learners experience reading comprehension difficulties?

Reading comprehension difficulties in English Second Language is one of the challenges faced by some learners in Namibia. Bruwer (2013) mentioned that reading comprehension is considered as a matter of concern in Namibia. Every year the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA) provides examiners' reports for both grades 10 and 12 on how learners performed in various questions in different subjects and indicates the difficulties learners had in answering the questions. The DNEA grade 10 examiners' reports of 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 communicated the same concern that some learners showed reading comprehension difficulties in answering questions based on written texts.

A study by Makuwa (2010) on Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) III report also pointed out that Namibia was one country that performed below the average of acceptable reading competencies. In addition, the Oshana Region statistical results for grade 10 in English Second Language for 2012 revealed that only 1050 (33,3%) of learners out of 3170 were graded A-D in English Second Language. Because this performance was worrisome, the Oshana Region held teacher- parent conferences to share ideas on how to improve the grade 10 results in English Second Language and other subjects for 2013.

During one of the Oshana Region Teacher-Parent Conferences held in March 2013, some parents were concerned that their children did not know how to read properly in English Second Language and that some of them who claimed to know how to read were reading without understanding. The notion of poor reading comprehension left parents with many questions as to why children were reading without understanding. Parents also questioned the effectiveness of the teaching methods teachers used to teach reading comprehension. My experience is also that some learners who are fluent readers tend to be poor comprehenders. Such learners, when given texts to read, read fluently but when asked to say briefly what they have read, they are unable to answer questions based on the same text.

Scanlon, et al. (2010) identified three different levels of comprehension: (a) literal comprehension, which involves understanding information as directly stated in the text, (b) inferential comprehension, which requires the reader to make inference that connects the information directly stated in the text with the reader's prior knowledge and (c) critical comprehension in which readers engage to construct meaning from texts. It involves evaluating the information in the text in relation to what it means to the reader and to the writer's intention, expertise and perspective (Scanlon, et al., 2010).

My own observation is that, many learners find it easy to answer questions that require them to get information directly from the text, but they have difficulties with questions that require them to infer in order to get the answers and those that involve critical thinking. This is consistent with Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs and Barnes (2007) who stated that some learners understand the literal meaning provided by the text, but have difficulties with making inferences that require interpretation or integration of the text. Scanlon et al. (2010) added that some learners do not have the knowledge needed to make the necessary inferences and have limited processing that interfere with their ability to integrate information in the text with prior knowledge. Scanlon et al. (2010) also explained that failure to make inferences is associated with the reader's focus on reading words in the text than on obtaining a logical understanding of the text. This section introduced and

highlighted the problem of the study; the next section of this chapter discusses the statement of the problem.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The third report of the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ III) revealed that the reading competencies of several Namibian Primary School learners were below the acceptable levels. Such learners were unable to recognise and decode words and decipher the meaning of written texts at their level. The reports of the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA) of 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 were consistent with the SACMEQ results by indicating that several learners at grades 10 and 12 failed English Second Language examinations because they were unable to read with comprehension. Recent studies on reading comprehension in Namibia (e.g. those by Hilongwa, 2011 and Bruwer, 2013) have focused either on factors inhibiting reading comprehension at secondary school level or on exploring strategies used by teachers and learners to promote reading comprehension at grade 7 level. In addition, these studies have been case studies of limited generalization. To extend our knowledge in this area, the present researcher investigated reading comprehension difficulties experienced by Grade 5 learners in the Oshana Region. Grade 5 was selected because it is the first grade to use English as a medium of instruction after the transitional grade 4 in which English is used together with the Mother Tongue as medium of instructions. To enhance the internal and external

validity of the study, the researcher employed a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative approaches and employed triangulation during data collection-procedures that have not been used by other researchers in this area of study in Namibia.

1.3 Questions of the study

The study addressed the following three research questions:

1. What reading comprehension difficulties do the grade 5 learners have in English Second Language that prevent them from reading with understanding?
2. What methods of reading comprehension do teachers use to teach reading comprehension skills in English Second Language that may influence poor reading comprehension of the grade 5 learners?
3. What reading materials available in schools enhance the grade 5 learners' reading comprehension skills in English Second Language?

1.4 Significance of the study

This study would be of great value to the English teachers because it would point out factors that prevent the grade 5 learners from reading with understanding in English Second Language. Using the recommendations of this study on best practices to be used to improve the learners' reading comprehension skills,

teachers would be able to support and guide learners to develop the necessary reading comprehension skills that would enable them to read with understanding. Finally, the results of this study would encourage teachers to use teaching methods that promote reading comprehension skills. The research findings would be discussed with advisory teachers and the grade 5 English teachers at a half day workshop that would be conducted at Ongwediva Teachers' Resource Centre (OTRC). The purpose of the workshop is to share the findings of this study with the grade 5 English teachers and to make them aware that reading comprehension is one of the contributing factors to poor performance in English Second Language that needs to be addressed. This might help teachers to readjust their teaching strategies in order to promote reading comprehension in English Second Language and to boost the performance of learners in other grades, e.g. grade 10 and 12.

1.5 Limitation of the study

This study was constrained by the following two limitations: Firstly, some participants were not observed due to busy administrative schedules, illness and miscommunication between them and their Principals. Secondly, some participants misinterpreted the questions and gave irrelevant information. Lastly, some learners had serious language problems that prevented them from communicating their thoughts on reading comprehension difficulties. These communication difficulties might have affected the results.

1.6 Delimitation of the study

The scope of this study was limited to the target group, grade 5 English teachers and grade 5 learners in public primary schools in the Oshana Region. This study only focused on 40 selected schools from 88 schools with grade 5 in the Oshana Region.

1.7 Definition of terms

The following definitions, as defined by various author, were adapted and used in this study.

Comprehension

Comprehension is defined as the interaction of the reader with the text together with the reader's background knowledge and context in order to gain meaning (Taylor, Branscombe, Burcham & Land, 2012; Schunk, 2009).

Reading comprehension

Reading Comprehension is a multi-dimensional process that includes the reader, the text and factors associated with the activity of reading (Lipka & Siegel, 2011).

Metacognition

Metacognition refers to thinking about one's own thinking during the reading

event (Schunk, 2009; Tracey & Morrow, 2013).

In conclusion, this chapter introduced the study and highlighted the problem that instigated this study to be carried out. The following chapter reviews the literature related to this study and presents the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter outlines the literature review related to the research topic of the study. It gives a brief description of reading comprehension strategies that may influence poor reading comprehension. The chapter also points out reading comprehension strategies which are functional in teaching reading comprehension skills, and briefly outlines the comparison between good readers and poor readers. The chapter then concludes with theoretical framework on which the study was based.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Reading comprehension difficulties

Reading comprehension difficulties is the inability to make sense out of written texts due to lack of mental activities involved, inability to process information and other related factors (Scanlon, Anderson, & Sweeney, 2010). If learners do not understand what they are reading and are unable to answer questions or retell the story based on what they have read, it is an indication that they have reading comprehension difficulties. It is also important to mention that some learners experience reading comprehension difficulties due to the complex processes involved in comprehension. Readers should be able to actively engage in this complex process to be able to understand what they are reading.

Tompkins (2011) argued that the reason why some learners are struggling with comprehension is that they lack pre-requisites for comprehension such as background knowledge, vocabulary and fluency, and that they do not apply comprehension strategies. Tompkins (2011) also argued that it is difficult for learners to understand a text that has too many difficult words. He clarified that for learners to understand a text; they must have adequate background knowledge, understand most words in the text, and be able to read it fluently. Therefore, one could emphasise that learners should understand as many word meanings as possible if they are to understand what they are reading. Tompkins (2011) further argued that if any of these pre-requisites for comprehension is lacking, learners are not likely to understand what they are reading.

Cooper, Chard and Kiger (2006) concluded that learners who are struggling with comprehension do not read strategically, they read passively without using comprehension strategies to think about the words they are reading. Fletcher, et al. (2007) also added that poor reading comprehension takes place due to difficulties with inference, comprehension monitoring, text integration and other metacognition skills related to comprehension.

A good example related to this notion was given by Alber-Morgan (2010) who explained that there was a boy who loved to read and he was a fluent reader. The boy was given a test on reading comprehension but he performed poorly and was

placed at the low level of the reading group because he could not understand what he was reading. This example confirmed my own observation of learners who are fluent readers but have no comprehension of what they read. Such learners give the impression that they are skilled readers but they have very little or no understanding of what they are reading. Alber-Morgan (2010) further stated that fluency alone does not guarantee reading comprehension. Many researchers (Fletcher, et al., 2007; Williams, 2005; Caccamise & Snyder, 2005; Duke, Presley & Hilden, 2004) also concluded that some learners have difficulties to understand texts even if they can decode words successfully. This means that a learner may be able to decode words effectively, but if such learner does not know the meaning of words, comprehension of the text will be impaired. Bruwer (2013) also reported that it was not only learners with poor word recognition and poor decoding skills who found it difficult to understand texts but also those with good word recognition skills. This means that learners may read fluently but they may not understand what they are reading.

A study by Hilongwa (2011) also found that poor word recognition, lack of background knowledge, limited vocabulary, culture and lack of understanding of word meanings were some of the factors that created reading comprehension difficulties. Fletcher, et al. (2007) also explained that if the learner has difficulties with word recognition he or she would devote very little attention to comprehension. This results in poor comprehension. Tompkins (2011) added that

it is difficult to decode and understand a text that is loaded with unfamiliar words. Learners need to recognize words automatically so that they can concentrate their attention on comprehending what they are reading. This simply means that if the learner cannot decode words quickly they will not have time to think if they understand what they are reading or not because they give most of the attention to the decoding of words. McGee and Richgels (2012) concurred with this by pointing out that if the reader has difficulties with word recognition he or she will devote very little attention to comprehension. Because of this he or she will display poor reading comprehension. However, it should also be noted that word recognition alone does not guarantee comprehension (Morrow & Gambrella, 2011).

Cappello and Moss (2010) placed their emphasis on vocabulary and noted that readers with insufficient vocabulary have difficulties understanding what they read. If learners are presented with unfamiliar context they will find it difficult to understand what they are reading. For example, learners who have not been in a city will have difficulty to understand terms like, traffic lights, elevator, shopping malls, parking slot, etc. If these learners' background knowledge is not created they would have difficulties to understand the text because they have nothing to relate to. Therefore, it is important to note that, extensive vocabulary is important to the reader because it allows him or her to understand most of the words while

reading and together with fluency, context, and background knowledge, it promotes reading comprehension.

A study carried out by Collins and Smith (2007) found that reading comprehension difficulties occur due to failure to understand particular words, sentences, connections between sentences, and failure to understand how a whole piece of text is connected together. Learners should be able to understand word meanings, to see connections between sentences, paragraphs and also to make sense out of the whole text. For example, they should be able to recognize which sentence does not relate to the other sentences or to point out that they do not understand a specific word in the sentence or to identify a paragraph that does not relate to the other paragraphs. In addition to this, Bruwer (2013) pointed out that other factors that limit reading comprehension were the non-attainment of basic reading skills, lack of motivation for reading, a poor reading culture and low socio- economic status. Year after year, the DNEA also provides information regarding difficulties experienced and errors made by learners in answering questions in English Second Language examinations.

The DNEA grade 10 and 12 examiners' reports for 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 also revealed that learners lacked basic reading skills and sufficient vocabulary to understand instructions of questions. According to the 2012 DNEA grade 10 examiners' report many learners lacked the necessary vocabulary to understand instructions, thus misinterpreted the instructions of some questions.

The same report also revealed that some learners demonstrated through their answers that they could not interpret key phrases such as “apart from”, “what else” and “entertainment”. The report further indicated that some learners used irrelevant information in their answers. This report illustrated the difficulties some learners had in understanding English texts. Because of this, they were unable to answer examination questions whose instructions and key words they did not understand.

Some researchers and national reports (Cappello & Moss, 2010; DNEA examiners’ reports for 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011) concluded that learners misinterpreted questions in examinations because they failed to understand the instructions of questions. These reports also indicated that teachers should teach learners basic reading skills, and how to skim and scan while reading the texts. The reports made the following comments: “Candidates did not follow the instructions of the questions.”; “Candidates showed through their answers that they could not interpret key phrases.” “Some candidates misinterpreted the instructions of some of the questions.” “Many candidates lifted irrelevant information with answers.” These comments indicated that learners had difficulties to understand English language. Thus, they were unable to understand what the instructions of questions were asking them to do. In addition, learners were also unable to extract accurate information to questions from text because they were unable to interpret the questions correctly due to poor understanding of English language.

Bruwer (2013) also found that some learners read questions first before reading the text as a strategy for reading comprehension. These learners tried to locate key words in the text and copy whatever information they found next to the key words. These learners use a guessing strategy which is dangerous according to Hilongwa (2011) because it is not always the case that the words used in the texts are the same as those used in the questions. This requires learners to have a wide range of vocabulary that includes synonyms to be able to use the guessing strategy. Hilongwa (2011) further argued that if these learners were not assisted to improve their reading comprehension skills, they would always have their reading comprehension skills and ability to get education obstructed.

2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies used to teach reading comprehension skills that might influence poor reading comprehension

Almasi and Hart (2011, p. 252) defined reading comprehension strategies as “deliberate, goal oriented, attempts to control and modify the reader’s efforts to decode text, understand words and construct meaning of the text.” Tompkins (2011) also wrote that good readers are strategic and take active roles in the reading process. Learners should deliberately engage in a variety of actions while reading to be able to understand the text, such as draw from prior knowledge, decipher word meaning, monitor their comprehension, making predictions and generating questions while reading. The notion behind this definition is to make readers aware of the purpose of reading and certain actions they should be

deliberately engaging in while reading to determine whether they have reached their reading goal or not. However, being able to engage in a variety of actions while reading does not come automatically, it requires teachers to teach learners how to engage in these actions while reading.

A study carried out by Collins and Smith (2007) on the teaching of reading comprehension concluded that teachers emphasise more on text interpretations when teaching reading comprehension rather than on the process of reading comprehension. This simply means that some teachers do not teach learners strategies they can use to read with comprehension, instead they only focus on comprehension itself which does not help some learners to learn how to read with understanding. Consistent with this, Allington (2006) stated that most learners are questioned after reading texts without being given enough instructions on the comprehension strategies needed to answer the questions posed to them.

This is my own teaching experience when I was teaching grades 11 and 12 English. I used the same teaching method of asking learners to read the text and then answer the questions thereafter. I expected those learners to know the reading comprehension strategies to be used when reading different texts by grades 11 and 12. However, that was not the case as only very few learners knew some techniques that they picked up from the earlier grades. As a result, the majority of my learners continued to perform poorly especially in activities that required them to use inference because not all the questions required them to get the answer directly

from the text. This was also because learners did not learn the process of comprehension but the mere interpretation of texts.

Presley (2011) found that from grade 3 to the higher grades, learners receive very few instructions on comprehension, and instead, teachers focused more on testing comprehension. This means that teachers spend most of their time assessing learners on comprehension rather than on teaching them how to read with understanding. Williams (2005) argued that learners who struggle with comprehension possess inefficient strategies and use them inflexibly. He further argued that these learners were unaware of what good comprehenders do. They needed to be shown how and when to apply a variety of comprehension strategies. It is therefore the responsibility of teachers to teach learners how to use a variety of reading comprehension strategies because if learners are not properly taught they would never know how to read with understanding. Many researchers (e.g. Scanlon, et al., 2010; Tompkins, 2011; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011; Collin & Smith, 2007) have identified various comprehension strategies that are functional in teaching learners to improve their reading comprehension skills. A discussion of these strategies follows in the next section of this chapter.

2.1.3 The best reading comprehension strategies which are functional in teaching reading comprehension skills

Afflerbach, Pearson and Paris (2008) defined reading comprehension strategies as thoughtful behaviours that readers engage in while reading to facilitate their understanding of written texts. Many researchers (e.g. Scanlon, et al., 2010; Tompkins, 2011; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011) identified strategies that had been proven to have some significant effects on reading comprehension. These strategies included activating prior knowledge, comprehension monitoring, constructing mental images, generating questions while reading, making prediction, summarising, drawing inferences and making connections. Unlike other researchers, Collins and Smith (2007) identified only two best teaching strategies that enhanced reading comprehension. These were comprehension monitoring, and hypothesis formation and evaluation. All the identified reading comprehension strategies are discussed one by one below to express the necessity of each and its individual contribution to reading comprehension. The reading comprehension strategies are not discussed in order of importance and priority because they are equally valuable when promoting reading comprehension.

a. Activate prior knowledge

Tompkins (2011) stated that readers bring their background knowledge to every reading experience, and noted that they read the text differently depending on their prior experiences. Harvey and Goudvis (2007) also argued that readers think about

the topic before they begin reading and call up relevant information and related vocabulary to use while reading. This means that if learners have no prior knowledge of what they are reading it becomes difficult for them to make meaning out of the text. Scanlon, et al. (2010) added that this strategy involves teaching readers to think about what they already know about the topic. This makes it easier for readers to interpret new information from the text in relation to their prior knowledge in order to understand what they are reading. Harvey and Goundvis (2007) also added that the more background knowledge and prior experiences readers have about a topic, the more they are likely to understand what they are reading. Braunger and Lewis (2006) argued that learners' world and literacy knowledge provides a bridge between what they already know about a new text. This is important for learners to understand reading materials because if they have little or no knowledge of the topic it becomes difficult for them to understand what they are reading. Understanding what one reads depends on one's ability to connect what one already knows with what the text is about.

b. Constructing mental images

This strategy involves creating a visual image of how events look like in the text. It requires readers to attend to the text in an active way to be able to adjust their images as the text unfolds (Scanlon, et al., 2010). Readers who visualise as they read are better able to recall what they have read than those who do not visualise. Learners use visualising strategy to create mental images of what they are reading

(Harvey and Goudvis, 2007; Keene and Zimmermann, 2007). This implies that learners should see how events take place in their mind as they are reading the story. Bruwer (2013) added that when learners read they construct mental pictures for themselves of the events that are described by the author. For example, if learners are reading a story about animal shelter, those who have visited animal shelters before visualise the type of animals they saw at the shelter because their prior knowledge is activated and start drawing from the schemata they have regarding animals at the animal shelter.

c. Summarising

This strategy involves identifying and combining main ideas either orally or in written texts. Readers pick out the most important ideas and the relationships among them and briefly restate them in their own words so that they can be remembered (Tompkins, 2011). It is crucial that learners decide which information is most important and should be able to paraphrase such information. Teachers should teach learners to know how to differentiate the most important points from detailed information that further explain the main point.

d. Generating questions while reading

This strategy involves asking questions related to the text content directly to the author of the text. This helps the reader to read the text with an open mind in order

to answer those questions. Harvey and Goudvis (2007) stated that learners ask questions out of curiosity and in the process, they become more engaged with the text and this encourages them to keep reading to find answers. Tompkins (2011) also indicated that such questions help learners to make predictions, draw inferences and clarify misunderstanding as they read.

e. Making predictions

Making predictions involves the reader guessing what will happen in the text and see if the prediction comes out in the text. The reader should be able to integrate prior knowledge with information from the text in order to make predictions. It is important for the teacher to ask learners to think and guess what they will expect to happen in the text prior to reading. This motivates learners to read the text with open minds and see if their predictions were correct or not.

f. Comprehension Monitoring

Comprehension monitoring is a metacognitive strategy that involves individuals in thinking about their own thinking. This is the most important strategy in which readers think about their reading behaviour to see if what they are reading makes sense to them. If it does not make sense they take actions such as self-questioning, re-reading, checking inconsistencies and paraphrasing (Schunk, 2009), to clarify the area that does not make sense (Scanlon, et al., 2010). This strategy involves

the reader in thinking about their own thinking and emphasises the reader's responsibility to determine if the text makes sense and to take steps to clarify when comprehension fails.

g. Drawing inferences

This strategy involves readers to “read between the lines” in order to draw inferences by combining their background knowledge with what the author has not stated in the story directly. (Tompkins, 2011). Keen and Zimmermann (2007) also explained that when readers draw inferences they have an opportunity to sense a meaning not directly said in the story, but which derives from it. It is important for learners to read story two or three times in order to make inferences because the first time they read the story they focus on literal meaning, which will be followed by higher-level thinking. Tompkins (2011) further stated that teachers should explain to learners what inferences are, how they differ from literal meaning, and why they are important. They should also teach learners steps that need to be followed when drawing inferences such as activating background knowledge, looking for clues, asking questions and reaching conclusions.

h. Making connections

Harvey and Goudvis (2007) stated that readers make three kinds of connections between a text and their background knowledge: text-to-self in which readers

connect the ideas in the text to their personal experiences; text-to-world in which readers go beyond personal experience to link what they are reading to their world knowledge; and text-to-text in which readers connect the text to another book they have read or to a familiar film, video or TV program they have watched. Table 1 below shows the summary of the reading comprehension strategies as summarised by Tompkins (2011).

Table 1: Reading Comprehension Strategies (Tompkins, 2011)

Strategy	What readers do	How it aids comprehension
Activating prior knowledge	Readers make connections between what they already know and the information in the text.	Readers use their background knowledge to fill in the gaps in the text and enhance their comprehension.
Constructing mental images	Readers create mental images of what they are reading.	Readers use the mental images to make the text more memorable.
Summarising	Readers paraphrase the big ideas to create a concise statement.	Readers have better recall of the big ideas when they summarise.
Generating questions while reading	Readers ask themselves literal and high- level questions about the text.	Readers use questions to direct their reading, clarify confusion, and make inferences.
Making predictions	Readers make thoughtful “guesses” about what will happen and then read to confirm their predictions.	Readers become more engaged in the reading experience and want to continue reading.
Comprehension Monitoring	Readers supervise their reading experience, checking that they understand the text.	Readers expect the text to make sense, and they recognise when it does not so they can take action.
Drawing inferences	Readers use background knowledge and clues in the text to “read between lines.”	Readers move beyond literal thinking to grasp meaning that is not explicitly stated in the text.
Making connections	Readers make text- to- self, Text -to- world and text –to- text links.	Readers personalise their reading by relating what they are reading to their background knowledge.

Bruwer (2013) clarified that learners will not learn how to read with comprehension until they are taught by their teachers how to apply reading comprehension strategies. In addition, Block and Pressley (2007) argued that learners will not learn to understand by simply doing lots of reading but they need to develop an understanding of comprehension and what readers do to be successful through a combination of instruction, opportunity for authentic reading, and comprehension activities. This means that teachers should directly teach learners how to apply various reading comprehension strategies to be able to use them.

Allington (1994) also added that “reading comprehension is a skill with a knowledge base just like all other elements that support it and as such, it can and should be taught explicitly”. Duke and Pearson (2002) also argued that good comprehension instruction includes both explicit instruction in specific comprehension strategies and a great deal of time and opportunity for actual reading, writing and discussion of text. They further argued that writing helps learners to make better sense of what they are reading and leads to the understanding of texts. This simply means that reading comprehension strategies should be taught directly to learners so that they learn how, when and why they should have to use a combination of strategies while reading depending on the purpose of reading and the type of text they are reading. This is also because some strategies are cognitive in which thinking is required and others are metacognitive

in which learners are required to reflect on what they have read. For a learner to make prediction, for example, it requires such a learner to think about what will happen in the story he or she is going to read.

Morrow and Gambrell (2011) argued that it is important to teach readers to be strategic and this involves teaching them about the strategy and the conditions under which one might use the strategy. The two researchers identified three conditions. The first one is the 'reader factors', which includes what the reader brings to the reading event that influence the meaning one constructs. They also mentioned that the reader factors are unique to each individual. Scanlon et al., (2010) also added that individual differences in text-relevant knowledge they bring to a reading task will have a significant influence on their ability to make the required inferences and to understand the text. The second condition Morrow and Gambrell (2011) have identified is 'textual factors', which includes more traditional features such as genre, readability and concept density. Thirdly, 'contextual factors', which involve the setting in which the reading event takes place. These conditions influence the way learners understand the text, their ability to relate to the text and integrate their background knowledge with new information from the text.

Graham and Bellert (2004) also stated that providing learners with explicit instruction in comprehension strategies can be an effective way to help them to

overcome difficulties in understanding texts. They emphasised that learners need to be given ample opportunity to practice how, when and why they should use a combination of reading comprehension strategies.

Thus, Tompkins (2011) also wrote that teachers should demonstrate a strategy and explain how and when to use it and why it will help learners to become good readers, through interactive reading and thinking- aloud. Training in thinking- aloud improves learners' ability to monitor their comprehension during the reading event (Duke & Pearson, 2002). It is therefore important for teachers to take learners through the whole process involved in using reading comprehension strategies by clearly explaining and showing them how different strategies take their roles in comprehension in an integrated manner. Tompkins (2011) also emphasised that once learners understand how and when to use a strategy, they read independently, using the strategy as they read. Learners also benefit when teachers model all reading strategies, such as activating prior knowledge, summarizing, clarifying, using fix-ups and visualizing. Therefore, teachers need to provide scaffolding on strategies and gradually release the responsibility to learners as they become more and more confident to apply the strategies independently.

Morrow and Gambrell (2011) argued that the ability to use a reading strategy to improve comprehension involves teaching learners about the strategy, analysing

the reading task and making decisions about which strategies might best suite particular purposes, at particular times and under particular conditions. Graham and Bellert (2004) concurred with this and stated that providing learners with explicit instructions in applying comprehension strategies can be an effective way to help them to overcome difficulties in understanding texts. Consistent with this, Manset- Williamson and Nelson (2005) indicated that the more explicit the comprehension strategy and self- regulatory instruction, the higher the likelihood learners will make significant gains in comprehension.

According to McLaughlin and Allen (2009) teaching learners to be good comprehenders involves providing them with explicit instruction in comprehension strategies. Vankeer and Vanderlinde (2010) also explained that explicit strategy instruction is an effective instructional tool that increases learners' reading comprehension. McLaughlin and Allen (2009) described the process of explicit instruction by stating that it involves the selection of a text for teaching a set of strategies, explaining the strategy, modelling the strategy, guided support, independent practice and reflection. According to Baker (2002) modelling of strategies should take place through thinking-aloud methods used by the teacher and this will be followed by guided support in which the teacher helps learners to apply the strategy. The common idea from these authors is that learners should be directly taught how to use different reading comprehension strategies to attain comprehension of various written texts.

Pressley (2002) also wrote that poor comprehenders should be taught comprehension strategies used by good comprehenders and this should start with the teacher's explanations and modelling of the strategies followed by scaffolding learners' practice of the comprehension strategy during reading. Duke and Pearson (2002, p.162) also emphasised that "comprehension instruction in specific comprehension strategies require a great deal of time and opportunity for actual reading and discussion of text." This means that teachers should spend more time teaching learners how to use a variety of comprehension strategies to read texts with understanding.

2.1.4 The difference between good comprehenders and poor comprehenders

Schunk (2009) argued that comprehension is part of metacognition which involves understanding and monitoring the reading purpose and strategies. Tracey and Morrow (2011) supported this by saying that metacognition contributes to the understanding of how reading comprehension takes place and how background knowledge can be used to facilitate reading comprehension. Allan and Hancock (2008) also wrote that successful text comprehension involves metacognition, the active management of meaning creation through a process of mediation between the reader, text and content factors. It is important to mention that the goal of metacognition, according to Vankeer and Vanderlinde, 2010, is to help learners to become more aware of their own thinking during the reading process which leads to increased text comprehension.

The use of metacognition strategies differentiates good readers (good comprehenders) from poor readers (poor comprehenders). Several researchers (e.g. McLaughlin, 2010; Pressley, 2010; Schunk, 2009) expressed that good readers are very active participants in the reading process and checked their progress while reading through the text. These readers decide on what reading strategies they should use and are good at monitoring their comprehension through self-questioning, re-reading, checking inconsistencies and paraphrasing. In addition, McLaughlin (2010) pointed out that if good readers do not understand what they are reading due to lack of background information, difficult words, or unfamiliar text structures, they know a wide range of fix-up strategies to use, which include rereading, changing the pace of reading, using context clues, cross-checking cueing system and asking for help. On the other hand, poor readers have far less metacognitive awareness hence they do not monitor their comprehension or re-adjust their strategies properly when reading becomes difficult (Aksan & Kisak, 2012; Schunk, 2009). This means that poor readers do not monitor comprehension because they do not understand what to monitor, how, when and why to monitor their understanding. Thus, poor readers continue reading even if they do not understand. Reading comprehension requires learners' ability to monitor their level of understanding while reading. Teachers should teach learners how to check their current state of understanding while reading and guide them with questions to which they have to provide answers as they are reading such as, Does this make sense? Do I understand this word? Do these ideas fit with the previous

information? If the answer is no to any of these questions, the learner should use 'fix-up' strategies to rectify the comprehension problem (McLaughlin, 2010; Tompkins, 2011).

Pressley, (2012) and Schunk, (2009) argued that good readers are more knowledgeable about how the text is organised and are better equipped with strategies for information to complement text organisation than poor readers. Several studies (e.g. Antonacci and O'Callaghan, 2012; Schunk, 2009) indicated that good readers integrate new information in order to draw inference and to construct meaning. In addition, (Antonacci and O'Callaghan, 2012; Aksan and Kisac, 2012; Pressley, 2012) stated that good readers activate, use and integrate prior knowledge while constructing meaning whereas; poor readers have difficulties to integrate new information with prior knowledge. It is therefore important to mention that poor readers do not make inferences based on background information and cannot answer questions that require inference and have difficulties to recognise and define expression, organisation or important words in the text.

Many studies (Aksan and Kisac, 2012; Antonacci and O'Callaghan, 2012; Pressley, 2012; Schunk, 2009) pointed out that good readers understand and decide on the purpose of reading beforehand. This means that good readers determine whether they are reading to find main ideas, to get a general understanding of the

text or to get detailed information or for enjoyment of which poor readers lack. In fact, goal setting and prediction help good readers to be focused and concentrate to prove their hypothesis and to ensure that the reading goals have been achieved while reading. Poor readers do not plan anything prior to reading and do not know why they are reading. They also do not know how to use information acquiring strategies effectively (Pressley, 2012). He also wrote that good readers have good decoding skills that develop up to the automaticity level and are aware of when to expand more decoding efforts, for example, when to seek for clarifications. On the other hand, poor readers have poor decoding skills and their decoding skills have not developed up to the automaticity level, thus put more efforts on decoding which results in comprehension difficulties.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study was based on the constructivism theory known as Schema Theory developed by Bartlett in 1932 (Tracey & Morrow, 2011) and a Capacity Theory of Language Comprehension formulated by Just and Carpenter (1992).

2.2.1 Schema Theory

Schema Theory refers to the way in which individuals organise their knowledge about the world into structures or schemata to be easily retrieved when needed (Gunning, 2010). Schemata are mental networks of related concepts that influence

understanding of new information (Slavin, 2003). Schema Theory also describes the process by which readers combine their own background knowledge with new information in order to understand a text. It is based on the assumption that every act of comprehension involves the reader's world knowledge (Stott, 2001). According to the schema theory all readers hold different schemata (Cobb & Kallus, 2011) and are always culturally specific (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1980). Stott (2001) also believed that the culture of the reader can affect everything from the way how the readers see reading itself, the content and the schemata they hold to their understanding of individual concepts. Stott (2001) further argued that a concept may not be part of the schemata of some native readers or may have a different interpretation.

A good example of the influence of culture on comprehension was cited by Hilongwa (2011). She cited the case from the DNEA examiners' report for grade 12 examinations in English Second Language in which learners were asked to write about a "market day". She stated that learners who were unfamiliar with the concept misinterpreted the question because they could not relate to it. Carrel (1980) and Signal (1990) identified two types of schema: content schema which is the background knowledge of the content area of the text, and formal schema which is the background knowledge of the rhetorical structures of different types of texts. Signal (1990) added the third type of schema known as linguistic or language schema which includes the decoding features needed to recognise words

and how they fit together in a sentence. According to Carrel (1980) texts that contain culturally-familiar content schema are easy to understand and readers understand more of a text when they are familiar with content, formal and linguistic schemata.

Dzaldov and Peterson (2005) also wrote that learners who are not familiar with certain words struggle to read and understand texts even if texts are at lower level. Signal (1990) further argued that background knowledge of the content is important to readers and that content schema plays an integral role in reading comprehension when the content was familiar to the reader. This leads to reading comprehension difficulties sometimes when the content schema does not exist for the reader and when it is not part of the reader's cultural background.

Stott (2001) argued that when learners are faced with unfamiliar concepts they use strategies such as slow-reading or wild guessing which may result in more comprehension difficulties. Stott (2001) suggested that it is useful for the teachers to provide local texts or texts which are developed from the readers' own experiences by helping them to construct background knowledge on the topic prior to reading when reading comprehension difficulties occur as a result of cultural specific schema. Stott (2001) also argued that reading comprehension difficulties do not only result from the absence of cultural specific schema but also emerge as a result of non-activation of schemata. Tracey and Morrow (2011) also added that

prior knowledge plays an important role in reading comprehension because the reader assimilates new information with existing ones in order to understand what is being read. Although the notion behind Schema Theory is to assist with comprehension, it sometimes fails comprehension when the readers come to the text with prior knowledge but their schemata are not activated while reading. It is therefore imperative for teachers to activate the learners' existing prior knowledge through pre-reading activities and to construct new background knowledge. Thus, Stott (2001) emphasised that pre-reading activities should be used to build new background knowledge or to activate existing background knowledge.

Carrell (1988) and Stott (2001) identified several pre-reading activities in which teachers can construct relevant schemata which include visual aids, demonstrations, real life experiences, discussions, role play, text previewing, introduction, discussion of key vocabulary, and key words or key concepts, and association activities. According to Tracey and Morrow (2011), Schema Theory also states that people who read a lot have more elaborated schemas than those who read very little. These differences in schemas cause differences in people's comprehension of texts because well-developed schemata in areas of skills and structures will influence the reader's reading comprehension (Tracey & Morrow, 2011). Stott (2001) encouraged extensive reading for Second Language learners because it would help them to expand both their schemata and textual memory.

Aebersold and Field (1997) also wrote that learners should be encouraged to read more widely by being allowed to choose their own texts based on their interest.

2.2.2 Capacity Theory of Language Comprehension

According to Just and Carpenter (1992) a Capacity Theory of Language Comprehension refers to the way in which working memory capacity hinder comprehension. Fletcher et al. (2007, p.189) defined working memory ‘‘as a storage resource in which words and sentences are being held for extended processing and integration with prior knowledge, and as a mental workspace in which previous interpretation of the text is revised in relation to incoming information.’ Just and Carpenter (1992) also added that Working Memory (WM) capacity differs among individuals. These differences in WM capacity cause individuals to understand texts differently. This is because some readers have larger WM capacity than others that can store large amount of information. WM capacity hinders comprehension if the amount of activation available is less than the amount needed to perform comprehension. If some of the activation keeping older words and phrases is lost, comprehension will not occur. This means that words and phrases understood from the beginning of a long sentence will be forgotten by the end of such sentence and reading comprehension will suffer. Capacity Theory of Language Comprehension stipulates that, for learners to understand texts they need to have good background knowledge of the text they are reading to help them to interpret new information (Just and Carpenter, 1992).

This chapter reviewed the literature related to this study and presented the theoretical framework on which this study was based. The next chapter discusses the methodology followed to carry out this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a brief outline of the methodology followed to carry out this study. The chapter describes the research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, and data analysis. The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations adhered to in conducting the research study.

3.1 Research Design

The researcher used mixed methods of both qualitative and quantitative research designs. The researcher used a survey research design to investigate factors that prevent the grade 5 learners from reading with understanding in English Second Language in the Oshana Region. She also used a triangulation- procedure during data collection.

3.2 Population

Using the Oshana Directorate of Education's latest statistics (2013), a population of all 134 grade 5 English teachers and 4685 grade 5 learners from 88 primary schools in the Oshana Region was used for this study.

3.3 Sample

The researcher used the simple random sampling technique to get a representative sample of schools, teachers and learners. Firstly, the researcher randomly selected

40 schools from 88 primary schools. Secondly, she randomly selected 25 teachers from the selected 40 primary schools. Thirdly, the researcher randomly selected 60 learners in total from the 40 selected schools. A table of random numbers was used to select the sample of schools, teachers, and learners. First, the researcher listed all 88 schools and assigned each school with a consecutive number from 00 to 88. The researcher also listed all members of the target populations in 40 selected schools and assigned all individuals on the lists consecutive numbers from 00 to 40 and from 000 to 465. The researcher then selected an arbitrary number in the table of random numbers for each school or target population. If the number corresponded with a number that was assigned to a particular school or to an individual in the population, that school or individual was selected for the sample. The researcher then went on to the next number in the table and followed the same procedure until all 40 schools, all 25 teachers and all 60 learners were selected for the samples. Lastly, a criterion purposeful sampling technique was used to identify 30 learners from the selected 60 learners who participated in focused group interviews.

3.3.1 Teachers' demographic information

In the first part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to provide their demographic information. The demographic information of participants are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Gender distribution of teacher participants (N=25)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Males	3	12%
Females	22	88%

After the establishment of gender, participants were asked to indicate the types of school they were working in. Their responses are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Participants' types of schools (N=25)

Types of school	Frequency	Percentage
Primary (grades1-5)	1	4%
Primary (grades1-7)	13	52%
Combined (grades1-10)	8	32%
Combined (grades 5-10)	3	12%
Combined (grades1-12)	0	0%

Participants were also asked to give information on their highest academic qualifications. The results are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Teachers' highest academic qualifications (N=25)

Highest academic qualifications	Frequencies	Percentages
Grade10/Standard 8	0	0%
Grade 12/Standard 10	23	92%
Degree	2	8%

Participants were also asked to indicate their highest professional qualifications. The results are shown as indicated in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Teachers' highest professional qualifications (N=25)

Highest professional qualification	Frequencies	Percentages
Certificate	3	12%
Diploma	18	72%
Bachelor of Education(Honours)	4	16%
Master of Education	0	0%

Teachers were asked to give their years of teaching experiences in ESL at grade 5 level and the results on this are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Distribution of teachers' years of teaching experiences (N=25)

Years of teaching experience	Frequencies	Percentages
0-5 years	11	44%
6-10 years	5	20%
11-15 years	3	12%
16 years or more	6	24%

Table 6 shows that the majority of teacher participants' teaching experiences ranged from 0-5 years with a frequency of 11, followed by 16 years or more with a frequency of 6, 6-10 years with a frequency of 5 and the least was 11-15 years with a frequency of 3. Looking at these results, the majority of teachers who were teaching English at grade 5 level had done so for few years.

3.4 Research instruments

The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data from 25 grade 5 English teachers in the Oshana Region. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section required teachers to give their demographic information such as gender, type of school, the highest academic and professional qualifications, as well as years of teaching experiences. The reason for asking the demographic information of participants was to understand the background of the teaching experience of English teachers in teaching English at grade 5 level and the type of

school they were working in and the type of qualification they had in order to compare these with the reading level of learners. This was done to see if the biographic characteristics had an impact on the learners' reading comprehension. The second section required teachers to give their views on why grade 5 learners experienced reading comprehension difficulties. The third section required teachers to tick teaching methods they used to teach reading comprehension that could have influenced grade 5 learners' poor comprehension. The fourth section required teachers to tick reading materials available in their schools that may have enhanced grade 5 learners' reading comprehension. In addition to a questionnaire, the researcher also used an observation checklist to observe the grade 5 teachers on the teaching methods they used. For the 60 learners, the researcher used a reading comprehension test to test learners' understanding of written texts. The test comprised of two reading passages with different levels of difficulty. Learners were expected to read the passages and answer questions on them to determine their reading comprehension difficulties. The researcher also used focused group interviews to find out learners' views on what prevented them from reading with understanding. Each focused group interview consisted of 3 learners.

3.5 Pilot study

All research instruments were pilot tested in two schools that did not participate in the main study to determine their reliability and appropriateness. Only slight

changes were made in the questionnaire, other instruments were found appropriate.

Two teachers and six learners took part in the pilot study.

3.6 Procedure

With the support and guidance of her supervisors, the researcher designed the data collection instruments, a reading comprehension test, an interview guide for learners, a questionnaire and an observation checklist after the School of Post Graduate Studies (SPGS) approved the research proposal and permission to conduct research was granted. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the grade 5 English teachers and observed a lesson on reading for each teacher. The researcher also administered a reading comprehension test to the grade 5 learners at their respective schools on scheduled dates. Moreover, the researcher conducted focused group interviews after the learners wrote a reading comprehension test.

The researcher set up appointments with the grade 5 English teachers for the lesson observations, learners' tests and interviews on the first day of visit to each school. The participants were also given questionnaires to complete on their own time so that they could be collected during the final visit. Although, some participants requested for more time and asked the researcher to come back and collect the questionnaire on a date agreed upon, most questionnaires were collected on the last day of the visit.

The researcher observed one lesson taught by 22 teachers. Three of the teachers could not be observed because two of them were on sick leave and the other one was a Principal who was busy with the administration of grade 10 examinations.

All sixty learners wrote the reading comprehension test and thirty of the sixty learners were interviewed. The interviews were conducted on the same day after lesson observations and after learners wrote a reading comprehension test. The respondents were asked the same eight open-ended questions. The researcher used probes when she felt responses from the participants were either unclear or incomplete.

3.7 Data analysis

After the collection of data, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, graphical presentations and measures of central tendency were used to analyse quantitative data on factors that inhibited learners from reading with comprehension, teaching methods and available reading materials as well as data collected through observation. Test scores on the reading level of participants were analysed using frequencies, the t-test and the chi-square. Typological analysis and content analysis were used to analyse qualitative data from interviews. Categories pertaining to quality of word recognition, quality of reading comprehension, and quality of understanding word meanings were used to create patterned and thematic meaning out of qualitative data.

3.8 Research ethics

In order to adhere to ethical considerations the researcher first sought for permission from the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education after the approval of the research proposal and permission granted by the School of Post Graduate Studies of the University of Namibia. Once permission was obtained from the Permanent Secretary, the researcher requested permission from the Oshana Educational Regional Director. The researcher also asked for permission from the Inspectors of Education, Principals of participating primary schools. Lastly, the researcher got consent from sampled teachers and parents by signing a consent form to allow their children to take part in the study. To obtain informed consent from participants, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to them and informed them that they would be free to withdraw from the study at any time if they felt threatened in any way by the conduct of the study. To respect the participants' privacy data was collected from them anonymously. The research process did not in any way harm the participants.

This chapter discussed all aspects regarding the methodology used to collect data from participants. The following chapter presents the results of the study collected from selected grade 5 English teachers and learners in the Oshana Region.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The previous chapter dealt with the methodology and the research techniques that were used in this study. This chapter presents the results that were obtained from the research participants. The results are presented under the following three sub-headings that emanated from the research questions:

1. Reading comprehension difficulties that prevent the grade 5 learners from reading with understanding in ESL.
2. Teaching methods used by teachers to teach reading comprehension that might influence poor reading comprehension amongst learners.
3. Reading materials available in schools that could enhance the grade 5 learners' reading comprehension skills in ESL.

In addition, the results are presented in the following order: first, the results from the questionnaires are presented. This is followed by the presentation of the results obtained from the classroom observations, the reading comprehension test scores and finally the results of the interview.

4.1 Reading comprehension difficulties that prevent the grade 5 learners in ESL from reading with understanding

4.1.1 Teachers' responses on reading comprehension difficulties

Participants were asked to indicate whether their learners had reading comprehension difficulties or not. The results are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Teachers' responses on reading comprehension difficulties (N=25)

	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	22	88%
No	3	12%

According to Table 7, the majority of the respondents reported that their learners did not have reading comprehension difficulties in ESL, whereas few of the participants indicated that their learners had no reading comprehension difficulties. After the reading comprehension difficulties were established, participants who admitted that their learners had reading comprehension difficulties were asked to specify what type of reading comprehension difficulties were experienced by the grade 5 learners in ESL. Frequencies were used to analyse the data given by participants. The results are summarised in Figure 1 below.

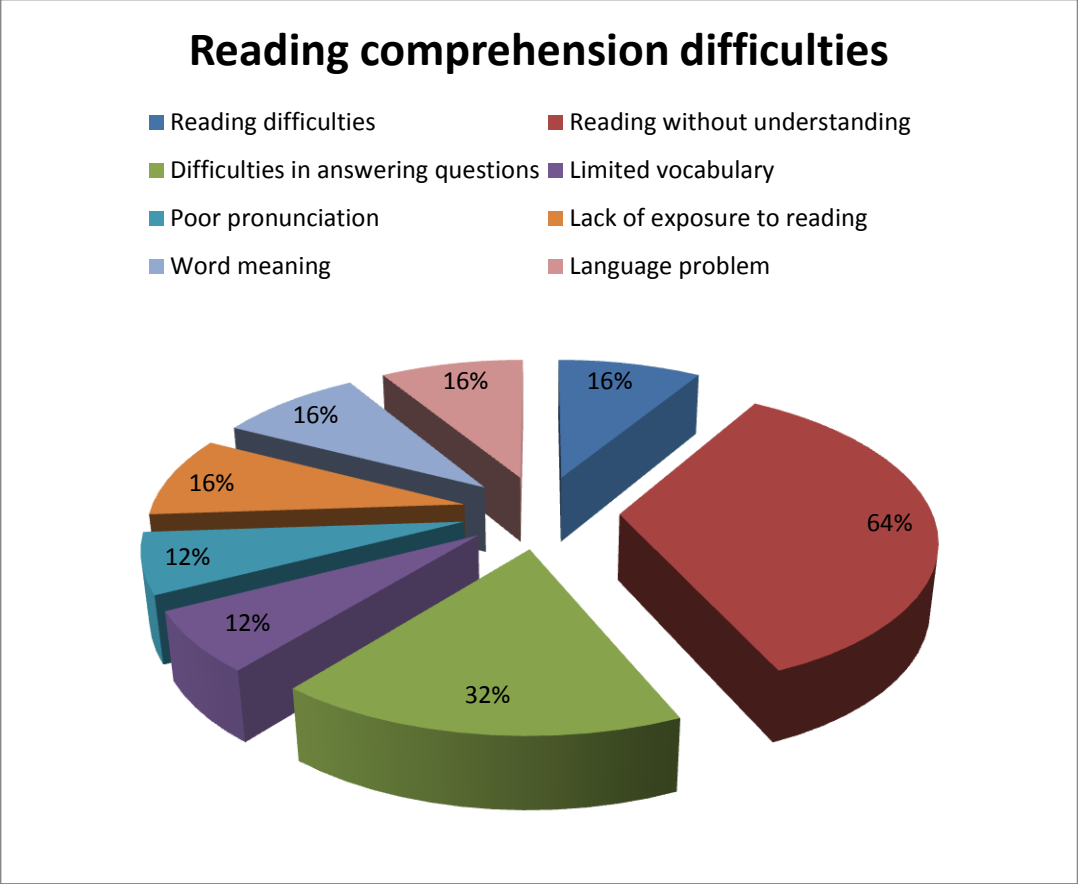


Figure 1: Reading comprehension difficulties (N =25)

Figure 1 shows that 64% of the participants demonstrated that their learners read without understanding in ESL. Figure 1 also shows that 32% of the participants specified that their learners did not know how to answer the questions based on the passage, while 16% of participants revealed that their learners were not exposed to reading, did not understand most words in texts and did not understand the English Language. Only 12% of the participants indicated that their learners could not pronounce words properly and had poor vocabulary. However, three participants

pointed out that their learners had no reading comprehension difficulties. These participants were asked to indicate what assisted their learners to read with understanding. Two of the participants advised their learners to read widely in order to understand English passages, one of the three participants indicated that her learners were assisted to read with understanding by using a support programme that was offered at the school across the grades.

After participants identified reading comprehension difficulties, they were asked to provide reasons for reading comprehension difficulties. Participants gave detailed information and the researcher used frequencies to analyse the findings by grouping the reasons as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

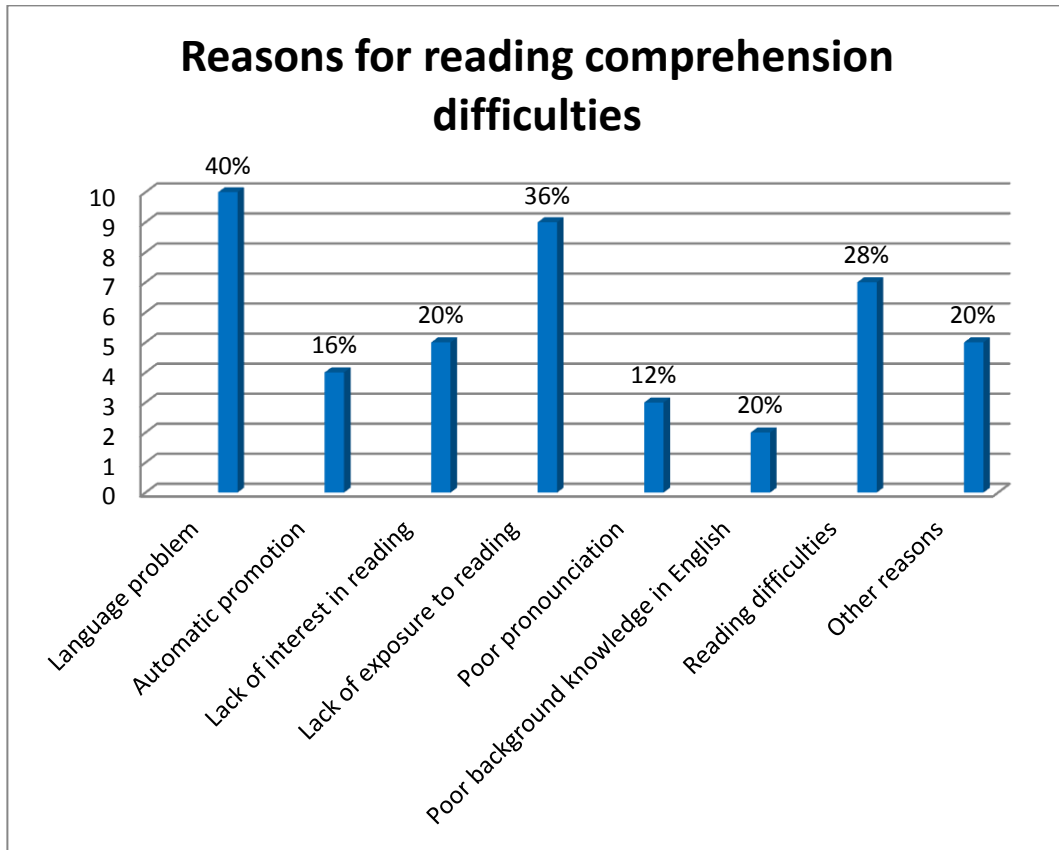


Figure 2: Reasons for reading comprehension difficulties (N=25)

The results in Figure 2 revealed that 40% of participants pointed out that the most common reason for reading comprehension difficulties was the language problem. This means that most learners did not understand the English language. This made it difficult for them to understand what they were reading. Figure 2 also shows that 36% of participants indicated that learners were not exposed to reading English and did not have a culture of reading, while 28% of participants expressed that their learners had reading difficulties because some of them could not read properly, while others could not read at all. The results also illustrate that 20% of

participants cited lack of interest in reading, poor vocabulary and other reasons such as lack of reading materials, inappropriate teaching approach or methodology, and unfamiliarity with parts of speech. Figure 2 also shows that 16% of the participants stated that their learners had reading comprehension difficulties due to the automatic promotion system, while 12% of the participants indicated that the reason for reading comprehension difficulties was that learners did not know how to pronounce most of the English words and 8% of the participants showed that their learners had poor background knowledge in ESL. Participants who indicated that their learners had no reading comprehension difficulties were also asked to point out the advice they give to their learners in order to read with understanding. The results are presented in Figure 3.

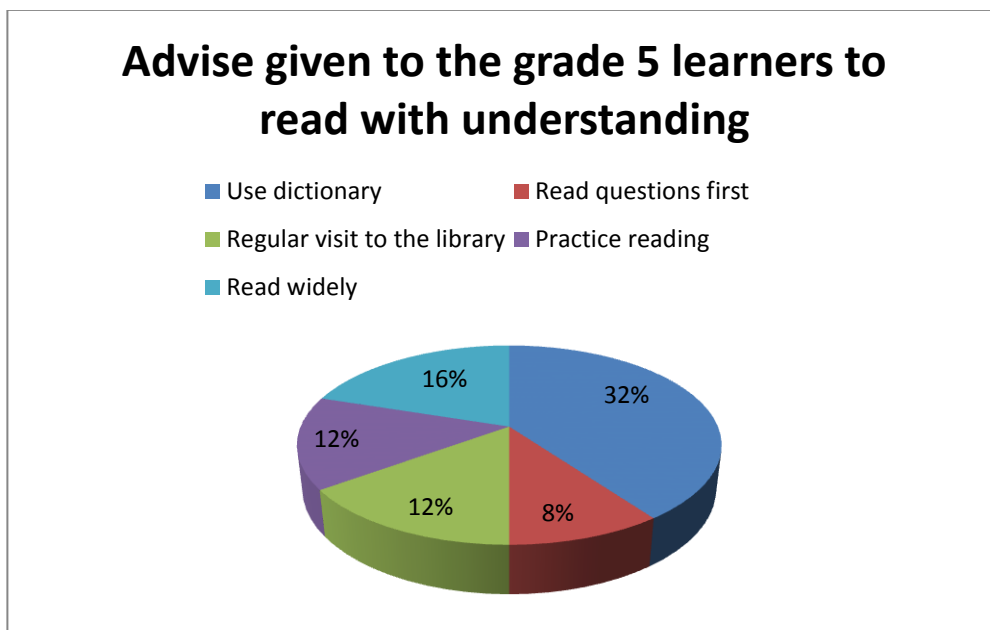


Figure 3: Advice given to Grade 5 learners to read with understanding (N=25)

Figure 3 demonstrates that the most common advice given to learners to read with understanding was the use of dictionaries to find the meanings of difficult words. The second in rank was to read widely, third pieces of advice were to visit the library, practice reading and to read the text three or more times. The least popular piece of advice given to learners was to read the questions first. Apart from teachers' ideas, learners were also interviewed to seek for their views on what prevented them from reading with understanding in ESL.

4.1.2 Learners' responses on reading comprehension difficulties

Thirty learners were interviewed on reading comprehension difficulties after they wrote a reading comprehension test. The aim of the interview was to solicit ideas from learners about factors that prevented them from reading with understanding. Only 9 learners out of 30 learners interviewed admitted that they had reading comprehension difficulties. The majority of learners (20 out of 30) indicated that they had no reading comprehension difficulties, while one learner did not indicate as to whether he or she had reading comprehension difficulties. Participants who agreed that they had reading comprehension difficulties had the following to say:

“Sometimes I have to write what I don't understand, the meaning of the words and the pronunciation of the words.”

“Sometimes I jumped the pronunciation and I did not read the full stop um... and I did not understand sometimes what the meaning of the words was.”

“Some words...some words are...are difficult and some...and some are easy.”

“Some words I did not understand them.”

“Some words are difficult.”

“BIS”

“I have ... I have difficult to re...to understand English passages because some ...some words are difficult...to read”.

“I have a problem; I did not know to speak, to read the English words.”

These statements show that some learners had a problem of understanding instructions in English, some could not express themselves in English, and some were struggling to repeat what others have said, while some gave irrelevant answer such as Basic Information Science (BIS) which is one of the subjects taught in grade 5. The most common reading comprehension difficulty indicated by learners was difficult words to read and to understand. Participants were also asked to indicate what they do when they come across difficult words. Their responses were coded and presented as follows:

Most of the learners (20 out of 30) interviewed expressed that they ask their teachers or other learners to explain to them words they did not understand. For example, *“I use to go and ask my teacher or my fellow learners.”* Four out of thirty learners indicated that they try to read and understand the passages, e.g. *“I try to read.”* Only 2 out of 30 learners stated that they spell or write, e.g. *“I try to spell.”* *“I try to write.”* However, four learners out of thirty gave irrelevant responses such as, *“Because some words are easy and some words we ... we have...we know the meaning of some words.”* *“I pray.”* *“Some days my teacher*

read but I am do my things.” “Some teacher read I am not listening,” while two learners gave meaningless responses like, “I read no very well to speak English.” “...I try to make my word easy.”

After the establishment of the reading comprehension difficulties, participants were asked to indicate whether the passages they read that day in the reading comprehension test were easy or difficult. Out of 30 learners who wrote the reading comprehension test and took part in the interview, only 4 learners indicated that the passages were difficult. They gave the following reasons:

“It was difficult.”

“It was difficult because some words was difficult to read.”

“It difficult reading to...to...to...r...”

“The word is difficult because the words, many question are um...are not easy.”

The above reasons show that one learner could not express him/herself well in English and did not manage to finish what he/she intended to say. Two learners gave senseless responses such as, *“Because the words is...the word is meaning.”* *“Because there no meaning.”* However, one learner expressed that the teacher reads for them, e.g., *“Because the teacher read for us.”* The above responses show that some learners did not know how to read, some depended on their teachers to explain difficult words, while others felt that there were difficult words they did not understand. In addition, most of the responses given by some learners did not make sense. Participants who indicated that the passages were easy were asked to

give their reasons why they felt the passages were easy. Twenty-two learners indicated that the passages were easy and clear, examples of some of the learners' responses are: *"It was very easy."* *"Because the passage we read was easy and it was clear."* *"Because there is no difficult word."* Participants who indicated that the passages were easy were also asked to give their views on what they thought made the passages easy. Their responses were coded and presented as follows: Nine out of thirty learners expressed that they tried to read and understand the passages. The following are the examples of what the learners said: *"Because I am understanding what I am reading."* *"First I read the passage then I understand what was in there."* *"Because I knew that what I read."* while 9 learners out of 30 learners communicated that the words were easy to read and to understand, for example, some said: *"Because it ... it have not difficult word."* *"Because the words are easy by reading."* Three learners out of thirty indicated that they read the passage twice and understood it, for example they said: *"You have to read the passage twice Ms. and you must understand it."* Two learners out of thirty indicated that they read the questions first before reading the passage, for example, *"Because first I'm read the questions and then I go to read the... the passage and then also I go get the correct answers."*

Two learners expressed that the questions were good while one learner indicated that the passages had all the answers. For example, they said: *"The question is nice."* *"The passage have all letters that we circle."* Based on the above mentioned

statements, the most common strategy that helped learners to understand the passages were to read and understand the passages, reading the passage twice, and that the passages were not loaded with difficult words. Very few learners indicated that they read the questions first before they read the passages. Participants were then asked to give their ideas on what action they take if they came across a word they did not understand. They gave the following responses: Most of the learners (20 out of 30) indicated that they asked their teachers or their fellow learners when they did not understand a certain word in the passage. For example, they said: *"I try by all means to ask my neighbor or my teacher."* Six learners out of thirty learners expressed that they used the dictionary to find the meaning of difficult words. For example, *"I go and get a dictionary and find that word in the dictionary."* Four learners out of thirty indicated that they spell the word and if they did not understand they leave it, for example, *"I just spell the letters and if it is difficult I just leave it."* Only one learner out of thirty learners stated that he/she reads slowly in order to understand difficult words. The learner said, *"You could ... you could try to read a little bit more slower for you to understand the words."* Three learners out of thirty learners gave responses that did not make sense like, *"We go to the library and we take a dictionary and you...you...you...and you...you know them."* *"Go to the library and the book and read."* *"To library...library...library a dictionary and read."*

It is evident from the statements above that most learners asked their teachers to explain difficult words to them, and use dictionaries to find the meanings of

difficult words. Only few learners indicated that they read further for meaning, ask fellow learners to explain to them and one indicated that he/she read a bit slower in order to understand. Lastly, participants were asked to indicate if they had any other difficulties they knew that made English passages difficult to understand. Few learners (8/30) indicated that they knew other difficulties. Although they indicated as such, some gave the same difficulties they already mentioned in the second question of the interview, while some did not cite any difficult. The majority of learners (22/30) mentioned that they did not know any other difficulties that made English passages difficult to understand. The following were the responses for those who admitted that there are other difficulties that made English passage difficult to understand:

“Yes, because sometimes it was very difficult to read the dictionary or to read the story, then if you do not understand you ask somebody else that you do not understand, then if you ask somebody who knows very well is give you a correct word then you have to know that.”

“Sometimes if you know the word or the meaning of that word you ... you must ask your friend or go into your dictionary and look for the meaning of that word, sometimes go to ask the teacher.”

“Sometimes we do not ... do not... do not... do not... oh... do not know that word you go to the teacher and tell something about that word.”

“Yes, there is another difficult because some words I am not learning them very well because our teacher does not... does not give that word.”

“You are about...about English are asking are very much.”

“I not speaking English but I did not know to...to reading and writing.”

A reading comprehension test was also used to identify factors that prevent the grade 5 learners to read with understanding.

4.1.3 Learners’ reading comprehension test results

Sixty learners wrote the reading comprehension test. Four techniques were used to conduct the analysis for the test scores. Frequencies were used to add the number of participants who scored the same marks, means of both boys and girls were calculated as well as the average mean, and the t-test and the chi- square were used to determine if there was a significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. The results of the test are presented as shown in Figure 4 below.

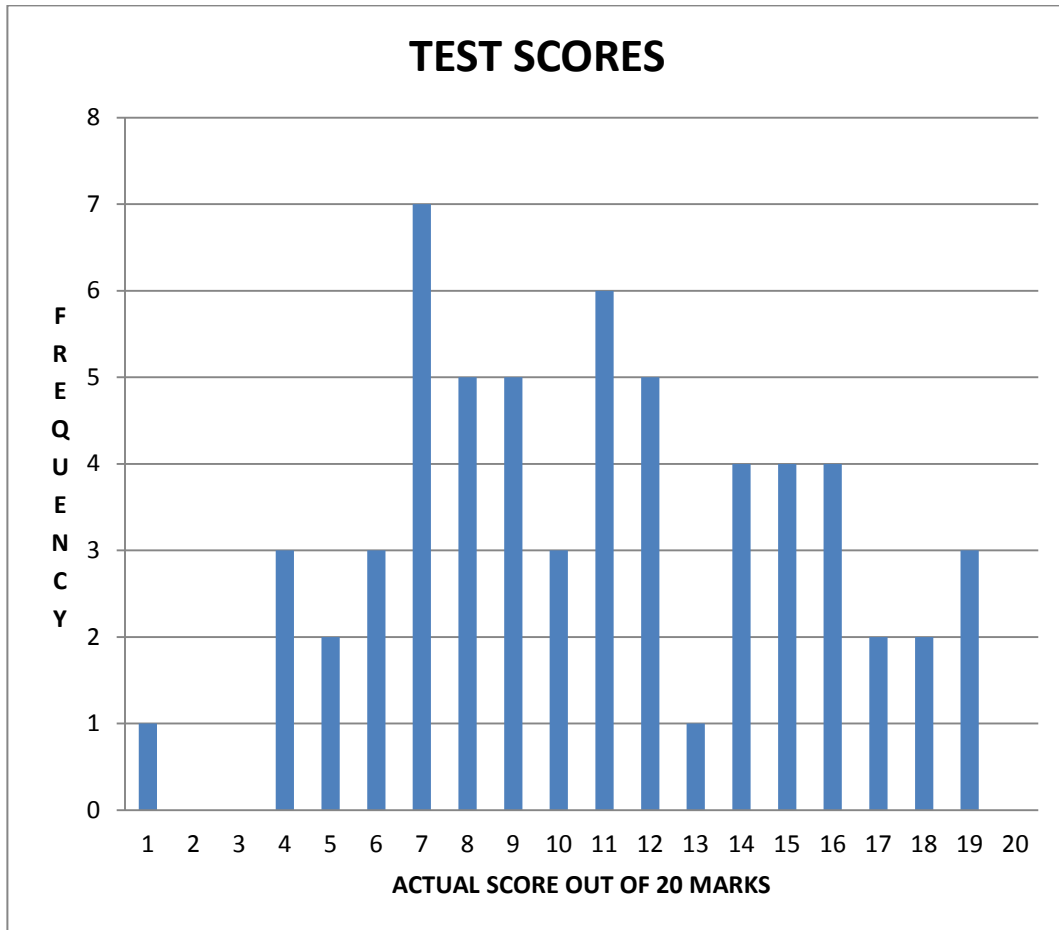


Figure 4: Distribution of reading comprehension test scores (N=60)

Figure 4 reflects the actual test scores of learners in the reading comprehension test. Firstly, frequencies were used to analyse the test scores. Figure 4 clearly indicates that 56.6% of learners managed to score 10/20 and above with 19/20 as the highest, while 43, 4% of learners scored below 10/20 with 1/20 as the lowest score. The results show that more learners performed well in the reading comprehension test than those who performed poorly. Although the majority of the participants performed well in the test (56.6%) compared to those who

performed poorly (43.4%), it was evident from the learners' answers scripts that most of them lifted answers from the passage and copied irrelevant information in their answers.

Secondly, the Means of both boys and girls were then used to calculate the t-test.

The t-test results are presented as follows: $t_{\text{calculated}} = -0,0446$; $t_{\text{tabled}} = 1,96$;

$N = 58$. Because the calculated value of t was less than the tabled t . The null hypothesis, H_0 which stated that the $\mu_B - \mu_G = 0$ was accepted at $\alpha = 0,05$. Because of this, it was concluded that there were no significant differences in the performances of both boys and girls. Thirdly, the chi-square was also used to find out if there is an association between the type of school and the type of teacher quality, and the reading levels of learners. The results were presented as follows: $\chi^2_{\text{Calculated}} = 0,4351$, $\chi^2 = 3,841$, $\alpha = 0,05$ while the $df = 1$. Based on these results the null hypothesis which stated that there is no association between the type of school and the type of teacher quality, and the reading level was accepted at 0,05 level of significant. Teachers' qualifications were measured against the type of schools they were working in and the performance of their learners. It can therefore, be concluded that the type of teacher quality and type of school were not associated with the test score marks because learners performed at the same level despite their teachers' qualifications and the type of schools.

4.2 Teaching methods used by teachers to teach reading comprehension that might influence poor reading comprehension

4.2.1 Teachers' response on the teaching methods

To answer the second research question, participants had to choose from a wide range of teaching methods they use to teach reading comprehension to their grade 5 learners. The results are presented in descriptive form as follows:

The results clearly show that, reading the passage silently and answering the questions was the most common teaching method used by the majority of participants (92%). The results also demonstrated that 76% of the participants explained difficult words prior to reading, and asked learners to read silently and respond to questions orally, whereas 72% of the participants discussed with learners what would happen in the story prior to reading.

The results also illustrated that 68% of the participants indicated that they encouraged learners to use dictionaries when they came across difficult words, read the story while learners were listening and then reread the story on their own, asked learners to summarize or tell what they read orally. The same 68% of the participants also indicated that they used other methods apart from those that were listed in the questionnaire such as role plays, reading after the teacher, using the tape recorder, reading sentences and explain them. It was also noted from the

results that 64% of participants indicated that they encouraged learners to reread the sentence or the paragraph they did not understand.

The results also showed that 48% of the participants used the following methods: using learners' background knowledge relevant to the story they would read later, telling a story related to the topic learners would read to create background knowledge or activating learners' background knowledge, telling learners to stop and reflect on what they read to see if they understood what they had read, and encouraging learners to construct mental images of the story while reading.

Forty percent of the participants encouraged learners to generate questions while reading, while 32% of them told learners to ignore words they did not understand and read further for meanings. To confirm what the participants indicated in a questionnaire regarding teaching methods, classroom observations were conducted.

4.2.2 Classroom observation results on teaching methods

The researcher observed 22 teachers during their English reading comprehension lessons. The following teaching methods were observed being used by teachers in their reading comprehension lessons. Frequencies were used to analyse data from the observation and were presented in descriptive form as follows:

The research findings showed that whereas 64% of participants told learners to read the text aloud one by one and answer the questions, 60% of them activated

learners' background knowledge, while 52% of them asked learners to read the text silently and answer the questions. In addition, the results also revealed that 48% of the participants set activities done before, during and after reading, whereas 44% of the participants asked learners to summarise the passage, and told learners to read the text and responded to questions orally. The results demonstrated that 20% of the participants asked learners to make predictions about the story. Only 12% of the participants asked learners to construct mental images, and to read and respond to questions orally, whereas 8% of the participants told learners to identify story structures. Moreover, 4% of the participants asked learners to generate questions while reading, and to monitor their comprehension.

Based on the classroom observations, the results also revealed that the most common practised teaching method used was reading the text aloud one by one and answering questions. The second method in rank was the activation of learners' background knowledge. The least used teaching method was to generate questions while reading and to monitor comprehension. Some teachers used a combination of teaching methods to help their learners to read with understanding, (e.g. reading and responding to questions orally, and summarising the passage). It is evident from the findings that the sampled English teachers in the Oshana Region mostly told learners to 'read the text aloud one by one and answer the questions' as a strategy to teach reading comprehension.

Teaching methods used by teachers were also confirmed by learners during the interview as presented in the next section of this chapter.

4.2.3 Learners' responses on the teaching methods from interview

In the interview, learners were presented with 16 items about the teaching methods their teachers used when teaching them reading comprehension in ESL. This was a “yes or no” question and learners were asked to state whether their teachers used the method or not. Frequencies were used to analyse the results (see Table 8 below).

Table 8: Learners’ perception of teaching methods used by the grade 5

English teachers (N=25)

Teaching methods used by the Grade 5 English teachers	YES		NO	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Reading the passage silently and answer the questions	30	100%	0	0%
Use the context of a story to understand difficult words	27	90%	3	10%
Use the dictionary to check difficult words	30	100%	0	0%
Ignore difficult words and read further for meaning	22	73.3%	8	26.7%
Use background knowledge	18	60%	12	40%
Explain difficult words prior to reading	27	90%	3	10%
Read the story while learners are listening and then learners re-read the story on their own and do nothing after reading	15	50%	15	50%
Create background knowledge	15	50%	15	50%
Re-read the sentence or the paragraph they do not understand	27	90%	3	10%
Reflect on what was read to check understanding	30	100%	0	0%
Activate learners’ background knowledge	26	86.7%	4	13.3%
Teach reading comprehension strategies and conditions under which they are used	15	50%	15	50%
Construct mental images of the story while reading	18	60%	12	40%
Generate questions while reading	20	66.7%	10	33.3%
Read a story and summarise it or tell it orally	30	100%	0	0%
Discuss what will happen in the story before reading	26	86.7%	4	13.3%

Table 8 above shows that the following teaching strategies dominated the teaching of reading comprehension in most schools in the Oshana Region: ‘read the passage silently and answer the questions, use dictionary to check difficult words, reflect on what was read to check understanding, and read the story and summarise it or tell it orally’. The least teaching strategies used by the grade 5 English teachers were: ‘read the story while learners are listening and then learners re-read the story on their own and do nothing after reading, create background knowledge, teach reading comprehension strategies and conditions under which they are used, and teach reading comprehension strategies and conditions under which they are used.

4.3 Reading materials available in schools that enhance the grade 5 learners’ reading comprehension skills in ESL

4.3.1 Teachers’ responses on the availability of reading materials

Participants were asked to indicate the materials available to the Grade 5 learners in their schools that may enhance their reading comprehension skills in ESL. The participants’ responses are presented in Figure 5 below.

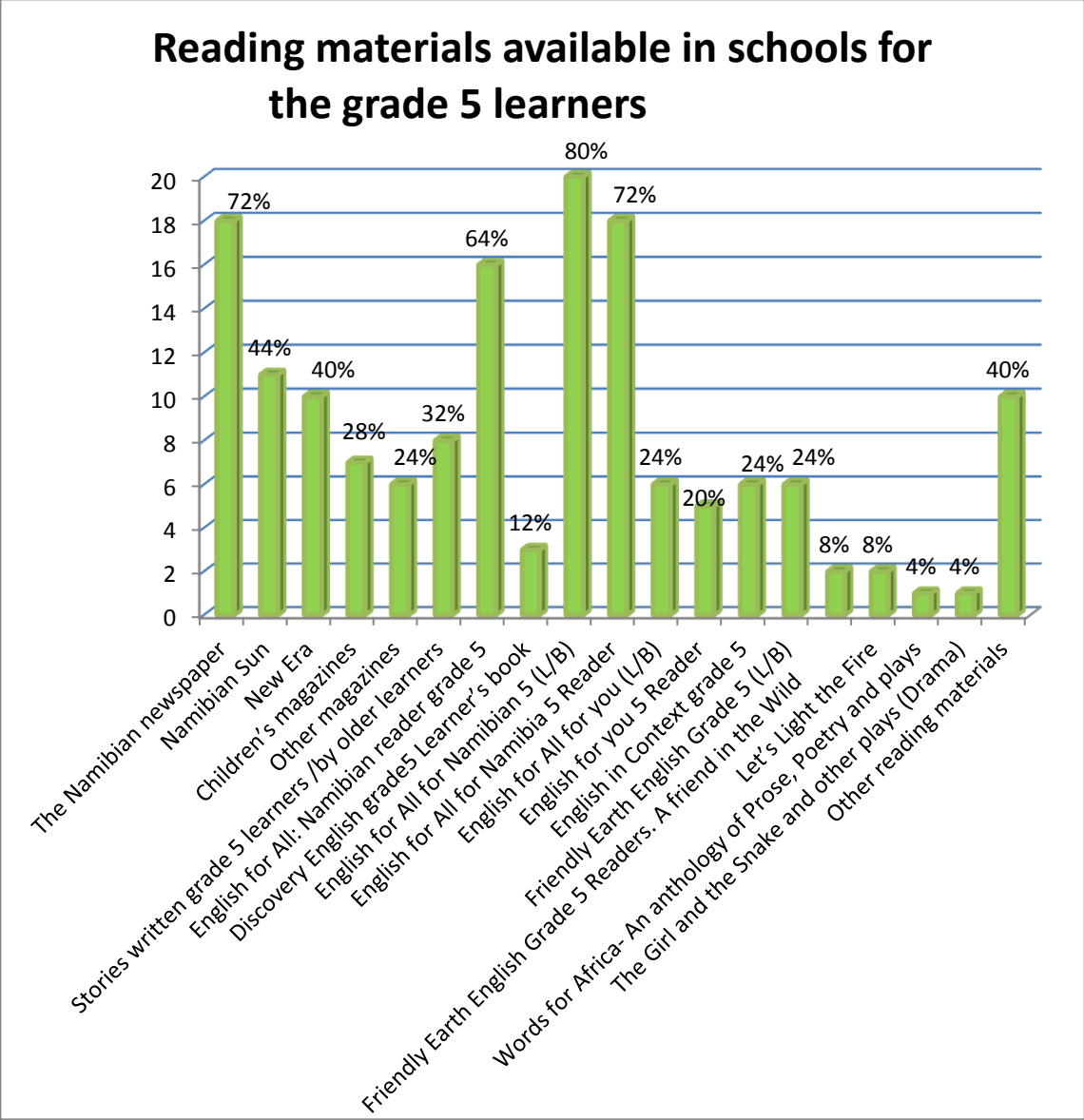


Figure 5: Reading materials available in schools for the grade 5 learners (N=25)

Figure 5 shows that English for All for Namibian grade 5 learners was the most common available reading material in most schools. The Namibian newspaper

and English for All for Namibia 5 Reader were the second most available reading materials in their schools and the least available reading materials were the Prose, Poetry and plays, and drama. After the reading materials available in schools were established, participants were asked to state how the grade 5 learners use the available reading materials to improve their reading comprehension skills. The following were participants' responses and the researcher used frequencies to analyse and present their responses as shown in Figure 6.

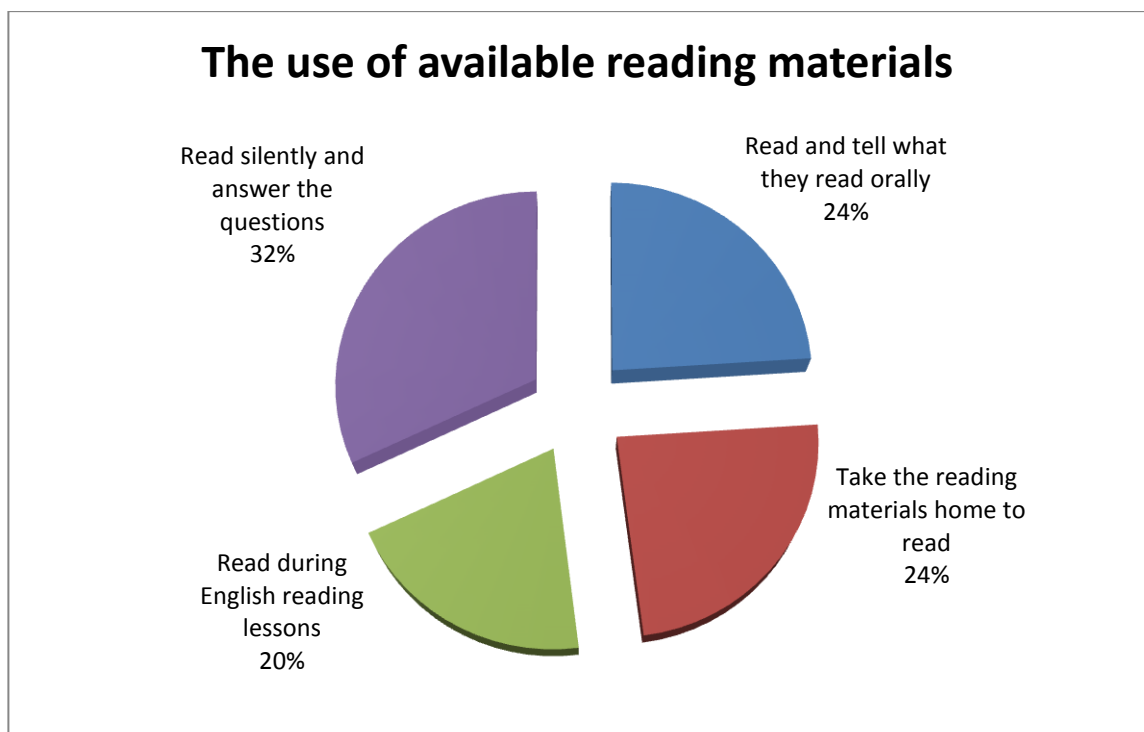


Figure 6: The use of available reading materials (N=25)

Figure 6 above explains that the available reading materials were mostly used to read silently and answer the questions. The second common use of reading

materials were to read and tell what was read orally, and to take the reading materials home to read. The least use of reading materials was reading during English reading lessons. Participants were also asked to indicate how often the grade 5 learners used the available reading materials to enhance their reading comprehension skills. Participants had to choose from the following responses: every day, sometimes, once a week, once a month and rarely. The results are presented in Figure 7.

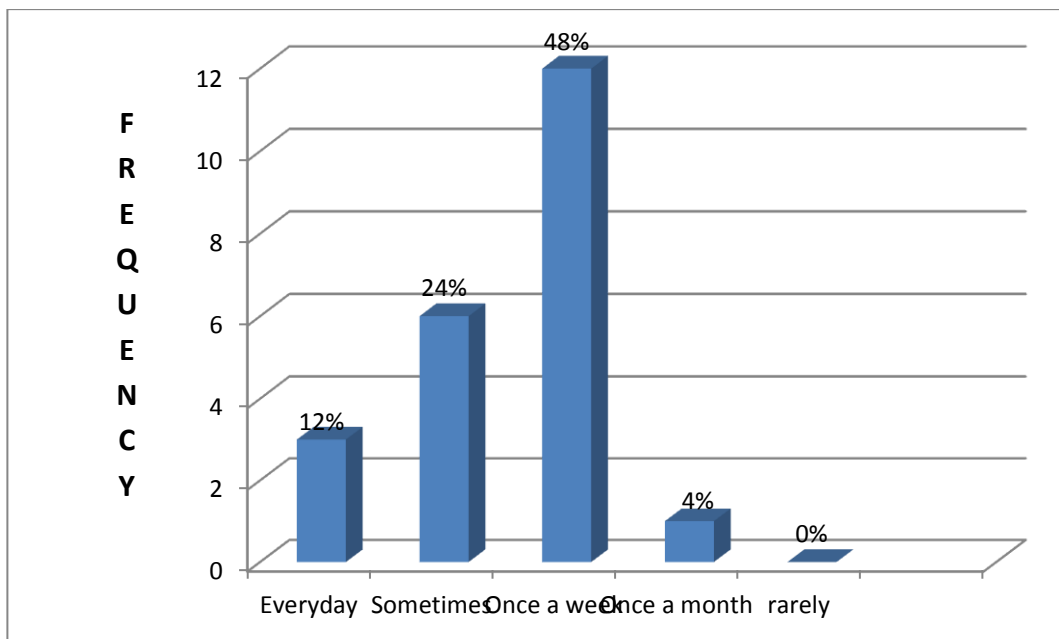


Figure 7: Learners' frequent use of reading materials (N=25)

Figure 7 above shows that the majority of learners used the available reading materials 'once a week' (48%). The second in rank was 'sometimes' (24%), and the reading materials were least used 'once a month' (4%).

Other observations

It was observed that some learners had language problems. They could neither understand nor express themselves in the English Language. Some did not understand the instructions in English and tried to repeat what others had said. Some participants gave irrelevant answers and senseless information. The following exemplify this:

"I read no very well to speak English."

"It difficult reading to...to...to...r..."

"Because the word is...the word is meaning."

"You are about...about English are asking are very much."

"To library... library... library a dictionary and read."

"Because the word is ... the words is... meaning."

"BIS"

"I pray."

"Oh, I am not understand."

"I am reading are asking to teacher."

"I read I not understand, I reading a passage and story."

"You are about...about English are asking are very much."

The above responses from participants show that speaking English is very challenging to some learners and this made it hard for them to communicate their thoughts as expected. Although their answers showed that they had reading comprehension difficulties, some of the learners did not realize that they had a

problem. This was because some of the learners who gave responses in the preceding paragraph were among those who indicated that they had no reading comprehension difficulties. The next chapter discusses the findings of the study presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The previous chapter presented the results of this study. This chapter presents the discussion of the results of the study obtained from the research participants. The discussion of the results are presented under the following sub-headings: teachers' demographic information, reading comprehension difficulties that prevent the grade 5 learners from reading with understanding in ESL, teaching methods used by teachers to teach reading comprehension that may influence poor reading comprehension, and the reading materials available in schools that may enhance the grade 5 learners' reading comprehension skills.

5.1 Discussion of findings on reading comprehension difficulties that prevent the grade 5 learners in ESL from reading with understanding

5.1.1 Discussion of findings on teachers' responses on reading comprehension difficulties

It is obvious from Table 7 that the majority of participants (88%) admitted that their learners had reading comprehension difficulties in ESL, while only (12%) of the participants indicated that their learners had no reading comprehension difficulties. Participants who admitted that their learners had reading comprehension difficulties indicated that the most common reading comprehension difficulty experienced by their learners was reading without understanding. Teachers also pointed out that learners were reading for the sake of

reading and did not understand anything. These findings are consistent with what Cooper, Chard and Kiger (2006) found that learners who struggled with reading comprehension did not read strategically. Instead, they read passively without using comprehension strategies to think about the meaning of words they were reading.

The findings from Figure 1 also revealed that some learners did not know how to answer the questions based on the passage; others were not exposed to reading, while some did not understand most words in texts and some of them did not understand the English Language. It was also evident that some learners could not pronounce words properly and they had poor English vocabulary. These findings concur with those of Hilongwa (2011) who stated that the lack of background knowledge, limited vocabulary, culture of reading and lack of understanding of word meanings were some of the factors that made reading comprehension difficult. Teachers who pointed out that their learners had no reading comprehension difficulties indicated that they advised their learners to read widely in order to understand English passages. The findings are consistent with what Stott (2001) stated when he encouraged extensive reading for the Second Language learners because it would help them to expand both their schemata and textual memory. Some teachers further indicated that their learners were assisted to read with understanding through a learning support programme that was offered

at their schools across grades. It was surprising that only one school mentioned learning support programme and how useful it was to their learners.

From Figure 2 teachers further pointed out that the main reason for reading comprehension difficulties was the language problem. Teachers further mentioned that some learners had difficulties in understanding instructions in English. For learners to understand the language, according to Hilongwa (2011) they should be able to read it, write it, understand it and speak it fluently. However, it is not surprising that some of the learners did not understand English because for the majority of them in the Oshana Region, English is both their second or third or even fourth language and many of them only meet English in the classroom.

Figure 3 revealed that some teachers mainly advised their learners to use dictionaries to find the meanings of difficult words, to read widely and to read the questions first. These findings were not consistent with those of Block and Pressley (2007) who argued that learners would not learn to understand simply by doing lots of reading but they needed to develop an understanding of comprehension. According to them, a combination of instructions, opportunities for authentic reading and comprehension activities promote reading comprehension. Apart from teachers' ideas, learners were also interviewed to give their views on what prevented them from reading with understanding in ESL.

5.1.2 Discussion of findings on learners' responses to interview questions on reading comprehension difficulties

According to the results that were presented in chapter 4, the majority of learners indicated that they had no reading comprehension difficulties. A few learners admitted that they had reading comprehension difficulties. The most common reading comprehension difficulty reported by these learners was difficult words to read and to understand. They gave the same reason when some of them were asked why they found the reading comprehension test difficult. These findings are consistent with Cappello and Moss (2010) who noted that readers with insufficient vocabulary had difficulties understanding what they read. These findings are also consistent with Tompkins (2011) who argued that it was difficult for learners to understand a text that had too many difficult words. The message that was communicated by learners who found the passages they were asked to read easy was that to read with understanding one needed to use a number of strategies. These included reading the passage several times and using the practice of reading questions first before reading the comprehension passages. In addition, passages that were not loaded with difficult words promoted reading comprehension. These findings are consistent with those of Tompkins (2011) who pointed out that for learners to understand a text they must have adequate background knowledge, understand most words in the text and be able to read it fluently. In the Namibian context, the results are also consistent with those reported by Bruwer (2013) and Hilongwa (2011) who argued that the strategy of guessing what the comprehension

passages might mean did not promote reading with comprehension. It in fact hampered reading with understanding.

5.1.3 Discussion of findings on learners' reading comprehension test results

The findings demonstrated that the majority of the learners did well in the reading comprehension test. Although this was the case, it was evident from their answer scripts that they lifted answers and copied irrelevant information from the passage. Learners who performed poorly in the test also demonstrated in their answers that they did not understand the passages and the questions that were based on the passage. These findings are consistent with the SACMEQ III report which revealed that the reading competencies of several Namibian Primary School learners were below the acceptable levels because they were unable to recognise and decode words and decipher the meaning of written texts at their level.

The findings further revealed that some learners misinterpreted the questions and gave incorrect answers. These findings are consistent with the DNEA (2012) examiners' report for Grade 10 which indicated that many learners lacked the necessary vocabulary to understand instructions and misinterpreted the instructions of some questions. The findings are also consistent with the same report as it revealed that some learners lifted irrelevant information from examination questions and comprehension passages when answering the questions. It was insightful to note that there were no significant differences in performance on the

reading comprehension test between boys and girls. One plausible meaning of this is that the reading comprehension difficulties were equally experienced by boys and girls. As reported in chapter 4, findings also revealed that there were no significant differences on the reading comprehension test due to type of school and type of teacher quality. These findings were counter intuitive because the literature review showed that poorly resourced schools and poor teacher quality did not promote reading with understanding amongst learners.

5.2 Discussion of findings on teaching methods used by teachers to teach reading comprehension that may influence poor reading comprehension

5.2.1 Discussion of findings on teachers' responses on teaching methods

The findings clearly demonstrated that reading the passage silently and answering questions on what was read were the most common teaching methods used by the majority of teachers to teach reading comprehension. The findings also revealed that most of the teachers explained difficult words prior to reading, and asked learners to read silently and respond to questions orally. These findings are consistent with those of Collins and Smith (2007) who argued that teachers emphasized more on text interpretations when teaching reading comprehension rather than on the process of reading comprehension. To confirm what the participants reported in response to questionnaire items regarding teaching methods, a number of classroom observations were conducted.

5.2.2 Discussion of findings on classroom observations pertaining to methods teachers used to teach reading comprehension

A total of 22 Grade 5 teachers were observed during their English reading comprehension lessons. The results revealed that the most common teaching method used by the Grade 5 teachers to teach reading comprehension was to ask learners to read reading comprehension texts aloud one by one and then answering questions on what was read. This finding is consistent with what Presley (2007) found. He found that from grade three onwards, learners received very little instruction in reading comprehension. Instead, teachers focused more on testing reading comprehension. The least used teaching method was generating questions while reading and monitoring comprehension. In agreement with Presley (2007), Allington (2006) stated that most learners were questioned after reading texts. In the majority of cases, learners answered the questions without being taught reading comprehension strategies needed to answer the questions posed to them.

5.2.3 Discussion of findings on learners' responses to interview questions regarding teaching methods teachers used to teach reading comprehension

A total of 30 learners who took part in the interview reported that the most dominant teaching methods used by teachers to teach reading comprehension were to: read the passage silently and answer the questions, use dictionaries to find meanings of difficult words stop and reflect on what they read, and to summarize or tell what they read orally. The least used teaching method were: to re-read the

story on their own and do nothing, to tell learners stories to create background knowledge for learners who have no knowledge of the story they would read later, and teach learners reading comprehension strategies. Bruwer (2013) concluded that this was unfortunate because learners would not know how to read with comprehension unless they were taught by their teachers how to apply reading comprehension strategies. Many researchers (e.g. Morrow & Gambrella, 2011; Williamson & Nelson, 2005; McLaughlin & Allen, 2009; Vankeer & Vanderlinde, 2010) concurred with Bruwer (2013) and advised that learners should be provided with explicit instruction in comprehension strategies to overcome difficulties in understanding texts they were asked to read.

5.3 Discussion of findings on reading materials available in schools that may enhance the grade 5 learners' reading comprehension skills in ESL

5.3.1 Discussion of findings on teachers' responses on the availability of reading materials

Results on this topic that were reported in chapter 4 revealed that English text books for grade 5 and the Namibian Newspaper were the most common reading materials in the sampled schools. Specialised reading materials on Prose, Poetry, Plays, and Drama were not commonly available in the schools. It was reported that these reading materials were not frequently used by learners. In fact, most teachers reported that the materials were used once a week. My interpretation of these

findings is that there was a lack of a variety of reading materials in the sampled schools. It could also be the case that the reading materials were not frequently used because they were insufficient in number for all learners to use them as often as possible. Another explanation is that the reading materials were rarely used because most learners were unable to read them. This is plausible because it was reported in chapter 4 that most learners in the study were struggling with speaking, reading and understanding instructions in ESL. In other words, they were unable to read and understand written texts in English. The following chapter summarises the findings, concludes the study and recommends what needs to be done in order to deal with reading comprehension difficulties in English Second Language.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding chapter discussed the results of this study. This chapter concludes the study and makes recommendations based on the discussion and the findings of the study.

6.1 Summary

This study was mainly carried out to investigate factors hampering grade 5 learners' reading comprehension in English Second Language in the Oshana Region. The study intended to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. What reading comprehension difficulties do the grade 5 learners have in English Second Language that prevent them from reading with understanding?
2. What methods of reading comprehension do teachers use to teach reading comprehension skills in English Second Language that may influence poor reading comprehension of the grade 5 learners?
3. What reading materials are available in schools that may enhance the grade 5 learners' reading comprehension skills in English Second Language?

The findings from questionnaires and interviews revealed that reading comprehension difficulties were relatively common among the grade 5 learners in the Oshana Region. In addition, the findings revealed that reading comprehension

difficulties experienced by the majority of grade 5 learners were largely due to the fact that the learners had not learnt the English language well and as a result they had severe problems understanding written texts in the language. Specifically, several learners found it difficult to decipher the meaning of many English words. This was demonstrated when about 43% of the learners performed poorly in the reading comprehension test. Moreover, the reading comprehension difficulties experienced by the learners were evident in the interview responses. It was clear in the responses that a number of learners did not understand English and they were unable to respond to questions appropriately. Other reasons that were used to explain reading comprehension difficulties amongst grade 5 learners were: lack of interest in reading, lack of exposure to reading, limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, poor background knowledge in English, reading difficulties, lack of reading materials and inappropriate teaching methodologies that did not include teaching learners strategies of how to read with understanding.

6.2 Conclusion

This study has yielded findings that enable me to conclude that reading comprehension difficulties in English Second Language were relatively common amongst the sampled grade 5 learners in the Oshana Region. As indicated in the summary above, the reading comprehension difficulties were, amongst other things attributed to, learners' lack of knowledge of the English language, reading without understanding, lack of interest in reading, poor background knowledge in

English, limited vocabulary, and difficult words to read and understand. It can also be concluded that the sampled grade 5 English teachers did not use a variety of reading comprehension methods when teaching reading comprehension. It was found that the teachers focused more on the literal meaning of the texts than on teaching learners how to read with understanding. Moreover, based on the evidence provided, this study concluded that there was a lack of a variety of reading materials in the sampled schools in the Oshana Region.

6.3 Recommendations of the study

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend the following:

1. The Ministry of Education should consider providing grade 5 English teachers in the country with ‘in-service’ professional development training in reading comprehension teaching strategies to address learner reading comprehension difficulties. This would enable teachers to use the strategies when teaching their learners how to read with understanding.
2. Teachers should take further courses in the teaching of English Second Language offered by the University of Namibia or by other universities to enhance their knowledge in teaching reading comprehension.
3. The National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) should spearhead the development of a wide range of reading materials in line with the grade 5 English curriculum that would be used to enhance learners’ reading comprehension skills.

4. Teachers should create platforms for learners to practise speaking English in the school or during lessons to improve their speaking and listening skills. This recommendation emanates from this study's finding which indicated that the majority of the sampled learners were unable to read with understanding because they did not know the English language very well.
5. The whole Upper Primary Phase (grade 5-7) was not covered in the sample of this study. It is recommended that future researchers in the area should conduct studies that will cover the whole learning phase to investigate the continuous teaching of reading comprehension in ESL.

This chapter summarised the main findings of the study, concluded the study and made recommendations that emanated from the findings of the study.

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LIST OF APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Permission from the School of Postgraduate Studies

---UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

Private Bag 13301, 340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pionerspark, Windhoek, Namibia



The School of Postgraduate
Studies
P.Bag13301
Windhoek, Namibia
Tel: 206-3523

E-mail: cshaimemanya@unam.na

Date: August 22, 2013

Dear Ms Hilma Shapaka,

RE: RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER

1. This letter serves to inform that student:-MRS HILMA SHAPAKA (Student number: 8820805) is a registered student in the Department of EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION at the University of Namibia. Your research proposal was reviewed and successfully met the University of Namibia requirements.
2. The purpose of this letter is to kindly notify you that permission to carry out your postgraduate studies research has been granted. The School of Post Graduate Studies has approved the research to be carried out by you for purposes of fulfilling the requirements of the degree being pursued.

Thank you so much in advance and many regards.

Yours truly,

Name of Main Supervisor: Prof. Roderick F. Zimba

Signed: -----

Dr. C. N. S. Shaimemanya

Signed: -----

Director: School of Postgraduate Studies

Appendix 2: Permission from the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Tel: 264 61 2933200
Fax: 264 61 2933922
E-mail: Matthew.Shimhopileni@moe.gov.na
Enquiries: MN Shimhopileni

Private Bag 13186
Windhoek
NAMIBIA
22 August 2013

File: 11/1/1

Ms Hilma Shapaka
P. O. Box 366
OKAHAO

Dear Ms H. Shapaka

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

Your correspondence dated 20 June 2013, seeking permission to conduct a research study at some primary schools in Oshana Region, has reference.

Kindly be informed that the Ministry does not have any objection to your request to conduct a study at the schools concerned.

You are, however, kindly advised to contact the Regional Council Office, Directorate of Education, for authorization to go into the schools.

It is also advisable to have schools you intend to engage identified or proposed before you approach the Regional Office.

Also take note that the study activities should not interfere with the normal school programmes. Participation should be on a voluntary basis.

By copy of this letter the Regional Director is made aware of your request.

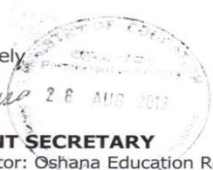
Yours sincerely,



A. Ilukena

PERMANENT SECRETARY

cc: The Director: Oshana Education Region



Appendix 3: Permission from the Director of Education: Oshana Region



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
OSHANA REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION
Aspiring to Excellence in Education for All
Planning and Development Division

Tel: 065 - 229800
Fax: 065 - 229833
E-mail: 77aipanda@gmail.com
Eng: Mr. Immanuel S Aipanda
Ref 12/2/6/1

Private Bag 5518
Oshakati, Namibia
03 September 2013

Hilma Shapaka
P.O Box 366
Okahao

Dear Mrs. Shapaka

Permission to conduct research

We are pleased to inform you that permission to conduct research in schools on the attached list has been granted on the following conditions.

The normal school learning and teaching programme should not be interrupted. The participation in the research is on a voluntarily basis. Permission to individual schools should be sought from the principal of a specific school.

We look forward to receiving findings of your research.

Yours sincerely

T. *Aipanda 03.09.13*
Mrs. Dutte N Shinyemba
Regional Director



All official correspondence should be addressed to the Chief Regional Officer

Appendix 4: Principal's consent form (N=40)

INVESTIGATING FACTORS HAMPERING GRADE 5 LEARNERS'
READING WITH COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE
IN THE OSHANA REGION

I.....the school principal, fully agreed to support Hilma Shapaka, a Master Degree student at UNAM to conduct her study on factors hampering grade 5 learners' reading comprehension in English Second Language in my school.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

Appendix 5: Teachers' consent form (N=25)

AN INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS HAMPERING GRADE 5 LEARNERS'
READING WITH COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE
IN THE OSHANA REGION

I.....an English teacher, fully agreed to support Hilma Shapaka
a Master Degree student at UNAM to conduct her study on factors hampering
grade 5 learners' reading comprehension in English Second Language in Oshana
Region.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

Appendix 6: Learners' consent form (N=60)

AN INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS HAMPERING GRADE 5
LEARNERS' READING WITH COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH SECOND
LANGUAGE IN THE OSHANA REGION

I.....a parent/guardian to..... fully agreed for
my child to participate in a research study to support H. Shapaka a Master Degree
student at UNAM to conduct her study on factors hampering grade 5 learners'
reading comprehension in English Second Language in Oshana Region.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

Appendix 7: Questionnaire for teachers (N=25)

AN INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS HAMPERING GRADE 5 LEARNERS'
READING WITH COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE
IN THE OSHANA REGION

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Instructions to participants

Do not write your name on the questionnaire.

Answer all the questions as honestly as possible.

This questionnaire consists of **9** pages including this page.

SECTION A

Please **circle** the letter next to the correct information

1. What type of school are you working in?

Primary School (1-5)

Primary School (1-7)

Combined School (1-10)

Combined School (5-10)

Combined School (1-12)

2. What is your highest qualification?

Highest Academic qualification/s (Please tick):

A. Grade 10 / Standard 8 Certificate	
B. Grade 12/ Standard 10 Certificate	
C. Degree	

3. Highest professional (teaching) qualification

Master of Education	5
Bachelor of Education: Honours	4
Diploma	3
Certificate	2
Other qualifications: please specify	1

4. Are you male or female? Please **tick** in the correct box.

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Years of teaching experience in English Second Language at grade 5 level.

Please **circle** the correct letter

- A. (0-5)
- B. (5-10)
- C. (10-15)
- D. (15 or more)

SECTION B

6. Do your grade 5 learners have difficulties understanding what they read? **Please tick the correct box**

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

a. If **yes**, what reading comprehension difficulties do you think your grade 5 learners have?

.....

.....

.....

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

b. If **no**, what helps your grade 5 learners to read with understanding?

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

7. According to your own experience and observation, why do you think some of your grade 5 learners have reading comprehension difficulties?

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

8. What advice do you give to your grade 5 learners to read with understanding?

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

.....

.....

.....

SECTION C

9. Which of the following teaching methods do you use to teach the grade 5 learners to read with understanding? Please **tick the box** next to the method you use.

Reading the passage silently and answer the questions	
Tells learners to use the context of the story to understand difficult words	
Encourage learners to use the dictionaries when they come to difficult words	
Tells learners to ignore words they do not understand and read further for meaning	
Use learners' background knowledge relevant to the story they will read later	
Explain difficult words prior to reading	
Read the story while learners are listening and then reread the story on their own	
Tell a story related to the topic learners are going to read to create background knowledge for learners who have no knowledge of the story they will read later	
Encourage learners to reread the sentence or the paragraph they do not understand	
Tells learners to stop and reflect on what they read to see if they understand what they are reading	
Encourage learners to construct mental images of the story while reading	

Encourage learners to generate questions while reading	
Ask learners to summarize or tell what they read orally	
Ask learners to read silently and respond to questions orally	
Discuss with learners what will happen in the story	

10. Do you have any other methods you use that are not mentioned above? **Please specify**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

SECTION D

11. Are the following reading materials available in the school for the grade 5 learners (please tick)?

Types of reading materials		Yes	No
1.	The Namibian newspaper		
2.	Namibian Sun		
3.	New Era		
4.	Children's magazines		

5	Other magazines		
6	Stories written by the grade 5 learners or by older learners		
7	English for All: Namibian reader grade 5		
8	Discovery English Grade5 Learner's Book		
9	English for All for Namibian 5 (L/B)		
10	English for All for Namibia 5 Reader		
11	English for All for you L/B		
12	English for All for you 5 Reader		
13	English in Context Grade 5		
14	Friendly Earth English Grade 5 L/B		
15	Friendly Earth English Grade 5 Readers. A friend in the Wild		
16	Let's Light the Fire L/B		
17	Any other reading materials available in your school that are not listed above (Please specify)		

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

12. How do your grade 5 learners use these materials to improve their reading comprehension skills?

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

13. How often grade 5 learners use the available reading materials to enhance their reading comprehension skills **(please tick)**

every day		Sometimes		once a week		once a month		rarely	
-----------	--	-----------	--	-------------	--	--------------	--	--------	--

Others **(please specify)**.....

14. Any comments on reading materials:

.....

.....

.....

.....

15. How do you encourage your grade 5 learners to read more widely to improve their reading comprehension skills?

.....

.....

.....

Appendix 8: Classroom observation checklist (N=25)

AN INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS HAMPERING GRADE 5 LEARNERS' READING WITH COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE IN THE OSHANA REGION

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Teaching methods/ strategies for reading comprehension	Yes	No	Comments
Activating background knowledge			
Making prediction			
Constructing mental images			
Identifying story structures			
Generating questions while reading			
Comprehension monitoring: reminded to re-read, check word meaning, read further for meanings			
Summarising the text after reading			
Read the text silently and answer the questions			
Read the passage aloud one by one and answer the questions			
Read and discuss the text before answering questions			
Set activities to be done before, during and after reading			
Read the text and respond to question orally			
Other teaching methods used:			

Appendix 9: A reading comprehension test (N=30)

AN INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS HAMPERING GRADE 5 LEARNERS'
READING WITH COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE
IN THE OSHANA REGION
ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION TEST FOR LEARNERS

Learners' number:

INSTRUCTIONS TO LEARNERS

Do not write your name on this paper

Read the instructions of each question very carefully

Answer all the questions

This test consists of 6 **pages** including this page

READING COMPREHENSION PASSAGE 1

Read the following passage about a Special Christmas Present and answer the questions that follow:

David wants to buy a Christmas present for a very special person, his mother. David’s father gives him N\$50.00 every week as pocket money and David puts N\$20.00 into his bank account. After three months David takes N\$20.00 out of his bank account and goes to the shopping mall. He looks and looks for a perfect gift. Suddenly, he sees a beautiful necklace in the shape of his favourite pet. His favourite pet is a spider. He says to himself, “My mother loves jewellery”, and the necklace costs only N\$17.00. He buys the necklace and takes it home. He wraps the present into a Christmas paper and places it under the Christmas tree. He is very excited and he is looking forward to Christmas morning to see the joy on his mother’s face. But when his mother opens the present, she screams with fright because she sees a spider.

A. Use the information from the passage to answer the questions that follow in the space provided.

- 1. What does David want to buy for his mother?
..... (1)
- 2. Where does David get money from?
..... (1)

3. How much money does David take to the mall?

.....

(1)

4. What does David buy for his mother?

..... (1)

5. What does David do with the present when he takes it home?

.....

(1)

6. Why does David's mother scream?

..... (2)

7. Why does David buy a spider necklace?

..... (2)

8. Where does David put the present on Christmas Eve?

..... (1)

[10]

B. Use the word in the box to complete the summary below. Each word must be used only once

bank necklace mall money opens paper present spider tree
--

David saves up his pocket.....to buy a Christmas.....for his mother. After three months, he takes N\$ 20.00 out of his.....account and goes to the.....He buys a beautiful..... for his mother. He wraps it in a Christmas..... and places it under the ChristmasBut when his mother..... the gift, she screams, because she sees a.....

[5]

READING COMPREHENSION PASSAGE 2

Read the following passage about Wild Animal Shelter and answer the questions that follow:

Daniel had always liked Zoos. It was great to see animals that did not live around his house. Around his house he could see cows or donkeys, but could not see lions or zebras. He could see sheep or goats, but he could not see monkeys or hyenas. Zoos were a great and fascinating way to spend his weekend learning about animals.

Today, he was trying to go to something a little different. He had learned that near his house there was an animal shelter. It was not a regular shelter, though. He had been to those before, where you could adopt dogs, cats and even an occasional fat pig or goat. This place he was going to had lions, cheetahs and kudus. It was not a regular shelter.

As he arrived, he was surprised, because he heard lions even from the parking place. The place was small, but nicely-kept. It was clean and the volunteers

working at the entrance were very helpful. He and his family toured the place at their own pace, examining the cages and habitats the animals lived in.

Daniel was immediately struck by the differences between this place and a zoo. Zoos had beautiful habitats set up for each animal, but you could not get near the animals at all. At this shelter, he was almost close enough to reach out and touch the animals, even if there were two fences between him and the animals. There were not as many people, either so it seemed like a more personal experience. The paths were narrow and covered with trees that made the animals feel more at home and gave them shade.

It was interesting to stare a lion in the eyes when you could almost reach out and touch it. It was fun to watch the bears pace back and forth and wiggle their lips at you with great expressions. They were silly creatures. Then there were cheetahs lazing in the midday heat and the monkeys grooming themselves. It was a very neat experience.

The best part about the place was stories. Each animal had a story posted up on the side of their cage. Each had been rescued from abuse or taken when they were no longer wanted. These were hard luck stories with happy ending. Someone at this shelter had stepped up to take care of the animals, and now Daniel could enjoy meeting them and learn from them. When it was finally time to go, they all thanked the volunteers and made a donation. Shelters always needed money, food for animals, and help. It made them feel good to be helping out any way they could. It was a great place, and Daniel could not wait to return.

Use the information from the story to answer the questions below. **Please circle the letter next to the correct answer.**

1. Where is Daniel going?

A. The place

B. The animal shelter

C. The Zoo

D. The museum

(1)

2. What is different about this animal shelter compared to the other ones Daniel has seen?

A. They have wild animals, not just dogs and cats

B. This one is far away

C. This one is free

D. This one has only injured animals

(1)

3. What kind of animals does the shelter **NOT** have?

A. Zebras

B. Lions

C. Cheetahs

D. Kudus

(1)

4. Which of the following is **NOT** a reason why Daniel likes this shelter better than the Zoo?
- A. They can get closer to the animals.
 - B. There is a rescue story for each animal.
 - C. They have better snacks at the shelter
 - D. There are less people so it is nicer and quieter. (1)

5. How does Daniel feel at the end of the story?
- A. He thinks the Zoo is nicer
 - B. He is scared to come back
 - C. He is sad to leave
 - D. He is happy to donate money for a good cause. (1)

[5]

Total Marks..... [20]

Appendix 10: Learners' Interview Guide (N=30)

AN INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS HAMPERING GRADE 5 LEARNERS' READING WITH COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE IN THE OSHANA REGION

Introduction

My name is Hilma Shapaka, a student from the University of Namibia. I come to talk to you today about reading comprehension difficulties in English Second Language and I want you to share with me things that prevent you to read with that prevent you from reading with understanding. Our discussion will be divided into two parts: A and B. In part A, I will ask each and every one of you to tell me what problems you have that prevents you from reading with understanding. In part B, you will respond according to what your teacher tells you in the class especially when reading for comprehension.

Part A

1. Do you have any difficulties understanding English passages?
2. What difficulties do you have when reading English passages?
3. What do you do when you do not understand what you are reading?
4. Was it **easy** / **difficult** to understand the reading passages that you read today?
5. What do you think makes the passages **easy/difficult** to understand?
6. What do you do when you come to a word that you do not understand?

7. Do you have any other difficulties that you know make English passages difficult to understand?

Part B

	Yes	No
1. Does your teacher ask you to reading the passage silently and answer the questions?		
2. Does your teacher tell you to use the context of the story to understand difficult words?		
3. Does your teacher encourage you to use the dictionary when you come to difficult words?		
4. Does your teacher tell you to ignore words you do not understand and read further for meaning?		
5. Does your teacher tell you to use background knowledge relevant to the story you will read later?		
6. Does your teacher explain difficult words before you start reading the story?		
7. Does your teacher read the story to you while you are listening and then ask you to re-read the story on your own and do nothing after reading?		
8. Does your teacher tell you a story related to the text/passage you are going to read to create background knowledge for learners who have no knowledge of the story you/they will read later?		
9. Does your teacher encourage you to re-read the sentence or the paragraph you do not understand?		
10. Does your teacher tell you to stop and reflect on/ think about what you are reading to see if you understand what you read?		
11. Does your teacher remind you about what you already know that is related to the story you are going to read?		
12. Does your teacher teach you what reading comprehension strategies you should use and under which condition you should use them?		
13. Does your teacher encourage you to create picture of the story in your mind while reading?		
14. Does your teacher encourage you to generate/ask yourself questions while reading?		

15. Does your teacher ask you to read a story and summarize it or tell what you read orally?		
16. Does your teacher ask you to read silently and respond to questions orally?		
17. Does your teacher discuss with you what will happen in the story before you read it?		