

CHALLENGES FOURTH GRADE LEARNERS ENCOUNTER IN READING
ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE: SIX PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN
OHANGWENA REGION

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION (LITERACY AND LEARNING)
OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

BY

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SEPTEMBER 2018

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to identify the challenges fourth grade learners encounter in reading English second language, with refer to six primary schools in Ohangwena region. The study specifically focused on challenges that hamper learners in reading English second language, the learners' abilities in phonological awareness, their knowledge of alphabet, and the reading instructional methods teachers' use when teaching reading to English as a second language in Grade 4. The study used a mixed research design approach. Forty eight learners were selected using probability random sampling; and six Grade 4 teachers were selected using purposive sampling. Interviews, observations and questionnaires were used to collect data. Regarding the types of errors made by learners, the study found that leaners failed to pronounce syllables, omitted words when reading, and failed to read fluently. These reading problems related to poor mastery of phonic sounds, poor syllable blends and weak visual discrimination. The study established that teachers used both the phonic and whole word approaches when teaching reading, but the whole word approach was more popular than the phonic method. One of the factors contributing to poor word attack skills among learners was identified as the use of the whole word method more than the phonic method in teaching reading. The study found the following factors contributing to Grade 4 learners' difficulties in reading in English: lack of reading continuity, automatic promotion, poor reading readiness background, lack of home support and poor teaching methods.

The study established a negative relationship between specialisation in Grade 4 and learners' reading ability. Learners taught by teachers who are not specialised in Grade 4

did worse in reading than those taught by specialist teachers. Regarding what support teachers provided to help learners improve in reading English, the study established that teachers gave limited assistance in the form of remedial work. It is upon these findings that the study recommended the following: staffing grade 4 with teachers who specialised in teaching grade 4; schools have to find ways of involving parents in helping learners read at home; and the establishment of community libraries. It was also recommended that teachers should not take teaching reading to be the specific responsibility of a particular Grade but to be a lifelong learning process which is developed in every Grade.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BETD:	Basic Education Teachers Diploma
BICS:	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP:	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
EBEGPHON:	English Beginning Phoneme
EDSFOR:	English Digit Span Forward
EDSREV:	English Digit Span Reverse
EEPHON:	English Ending Phoneme
ENWR:	English Non-word Reading
ERNCOL:	English Rapid Naming Colour
ERNLD:	English Rapid Naming Line Drawing
ESL:	English Second Language
ESODIS:	English Sound Discrimination
EWR:	English Word Reading
HED:	Higher Education Diploma
MBESC:	Ministry of Education Sport and Culture
NSAT:	National Standardised Achievement Test
SACMEQ:	Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Above all, I would like to thank the Almighty Lord who made it possible for me to succeed. My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisors Dr Kazuvire Rheinhardt-Heinrich Vei and Dr Lydia Shaketange for their efforts and support they provided to me despite their busy schedules. Their wholehearted support throughout the period of my research and the necessary corrections gave shape to this thesis.

I also owe deep gratitude to my lovely sister Ndesihafela Ndatulumukwa Sheuyange who changed the negative perception I had about research to positive perception. Your encouragement built a positive self-esteem in me. I would be remiss not to acknowledge computer data analysis and editing assistance I received from Dr M. Chirimbana. I wish to thank Dr G. M. Magaisa and Mr K. Hove who helped me to get a deeper understanding of research.

Special thanks go to my fellow student; Elizabeth Ndesihafela Nambundunga and my cousin Josehine Nashongo for sharing with me their knowledge and necessary information relating to this research. To all learners and teachers who participated in this study, I thank you for your co-operation, vital information that you have provided me with, which became the basis of this study. Finally, my sincere appreciation is due to my family members for their patience and understanding of my absence from them during the period of conducting this study. Last but not least, I am indebted to all persons who remain unmentioned here due to lack of space, for their moral supports and encouragements. May God bless you all!

DEDICATIONS

This thesis is dedicated to:

My husband: Mathews Nepando

My children: Ndaambeulu-Soomie Nepando and Phillipus Nghaambeulu Nepando

My parents: Simon Mwafangeyo Sheuyange and Hedvig Ndayelekwa Sheuyange

For the major role they played in my life. I thank them for their patience, love, encouragement and the support they offered me during the time I was carrying out this study.

DECLARATION

I, Ndahambelela Pefewa Nepando, hereby declare that this thesis *challenges fourth grade learners encounter in reading English second language: six primary schools in Ohangwena 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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.....

Mrs. Ndahambelela Pefewa Nepando

.....

Date

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

A child's success in school and throughout life depends largely on the ability to read. Teachers have the profound challenge of making reading a reality for all children (Mubanga, 2010). There is keen awareness that teachers in any given education system must, therefore, focus on providing children with the best possible reading instructions. A broad consensus now exists among researchers and educators regarding the knowledge and skills that children need in order to read, the experience that influences the development of such knowledge and skills, and the basic components of reading instruction (Mubanga, 2010).

Research tells us that a teacher's role is critical to a child's learning and that teachers can inspire children to read, write, and learn through thoughtful planning and developmentally appropriate literacy instruction (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000). The inability to read affects learning in all school subject areas and the need to come up with strategies to teach reading effectively has been the concern of educators for several years (Mubanga, 2010). There are assumptions that learners find it easier to read in their mother tongue but reality shows that this is not necessarily the case; learners also experience challenges reading in their local language (Junias, 2009). Literature reveals that children whose first language differs from the language of instruction will need additional support to build their oral language skills in the

language of instruction as they learn to read (Allington, 2002). Allington (2002) further argues that if learners do not have access to rich language experiences in the language of instruction outside the school, the school is expected to fill the void. This is particularly true for English language schools in Namibia's Ohangwena region because their primary school learners are less likely to be exposed to the English language and culture outside of school. According to Neuman and Bredekamp (2000), as children begin the process of learning to read, they need to acquire a set of skills and strategies that will help them reach the ultimate goal associated with learning to read, that is, comprehending what they read whether in traditional print forms or more technology-based formats. It is against this background that the researcher investigated learners' academic performance. This study was conducted to investigate the nature of the reading shortcomings and the possible contributing factors so that the results of the study with Grade Four learners could be used to come up with strategies to improve reading in English at Primary school level.

Chapter One presents and discusses the orientation of the study, outlines the research problem, the research questions and the significance of the study. The chapter also justifies the need for conducting the study and defines key terms of the study.

1.2 Orientation of the Study

Reading is one of the four language skills in which learners need to be well versed in their earliest years in formal schooling, since it builds the foundation for formal learning in school (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001). It is, therefore important to remember that if learners do not acquire this skill in the foundation phase, they will

struggle to master it even with the help of remedial teaching, and they will not progress well at school (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001). It has been established during the researcher's career as a classroom teacher that most Grade 4 learners struggle to read words, sentences, and even paragraphs from either the chalkboard or their English readers.

The shared concerns about low levels in reading achievements are levels 1 for pre-reading, 2 for emergent reading and 3 for basic reading. These levels were confirmed in Namibia by the study which was conducted in 1995 under the auspices of the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) (as cited in Makuwa, 2004). This study revealed that only 29.5% of Grade 6 Namibian learners could read at a minimum level of proficiency, that is, levels 4-5. Only 5% of Grade 6 Namibian learners could read at the desired levels 6-8 (Makuwa, 2004). According to the SACMEQ III Project report of 2007 (as cited in Makuwa, 2010), which was carried out in 15 African countries, of which Namibia was part, the largest increase in the reading were in Zanzibar (56 points), Namibia (48 points) and Mauritius (37 points). Thus, Namibian Grade 6 learners' reading scores increased by 48 points, from 448.8 points in the SACMEQ Project II of 2000 and compared to the SACMEQ Project III of 2007 where learners scored 496.9 points. The mean score was 500, with a standard deviation of 100 (Makuwa, 2010). Although there was an improvement, it was still below the mean. Uys, van der Walt, van der Berg and Botha (2007) stated that not all the learners are immersed in the same type of supportive environment at both home and school where their literacy growth can be enhanced. After independence the education system changed from the Afrikaans medium of instruction to the English medium of instruction (Mutenda, 2008). This paradigm shift

put a serious burden on the teachers' teaching proficiency. The goals of the language policy by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2001) suggests that lower primary teachers are expected to be proficient and confident enough to use English as a medium of instruction as from Grade 4 upwards. However, this is not the case in Ohangwena region where most of the teachers are not sufficiently competent to teach in English from Grade 4 onwards (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001).

In response to the challenges that learners encounter in reading English as a second language, Shaningwa and Hilukilwah (2009) have argued that the intellectual attainment of learners' performance in reading, writing and mathematical skills in Oshikoto region is not satisfactory. This is an indication that there are still significant areas of weakness in reading English as a second language. Mupupa and Shaakumeni (2011) found out that English teachers demonstrated an unacceptably low level of English language proficiency that in turn caused the pupils' English language proficiency to remain relatively poor across the upper primary phase. Therefore this study intended to investigate the challenges that the fourth (4th) graders encounter in reading English second language in Ohangwena region.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Language proficiency plays an important role in educational achievement. A major source of concern in Namibia is that learners have difficulty in reading and writing, and they are functionally illiterate (Mutenda, 2008). According to Mutenda (2008), numerous learners that entered Grade 4 in 1992 in the Northern regions of Namibia encountered serious difficulties in reading English the second language.

When learners face reading problems as is asserted by Mutenda (2008), the blame is often put on the lower primary teachers' unsatisfactory preparation of the learners at the lower grades. In the report on the National Standardised Achievement Test (NSAT) in Ohangwena educational region, of the 58 Grade 7, learners at a particular school that took the English test in 2010, only 3% achieved the excellent category at national level. In 2012, of the 47 Grade 7 learners at a particular school in Ohangwena Directorate of Education, again only 3% got an excellent achievement category in the English test at national level (Ministry of Education, 2012). Thus, learners are supposed to master the basics skills of reading English as a second language at the lower grades but it has been observed that by the end of the lower primary phase, many learners including the learners under study have not met the required second language reading standards (Ministry of Education, 2012). Therefore, this study critically explored the challenges encountered by the Primary School learners in Ohangwena region with regards to learning to read in English.

Specifically, this study looked at the following factors to see how they impact the learners' ability to learn to read English as a second language: phonological awareness, including syllables; phonemes, onset rimes, letter knowledge, knowledge of the alphabet, reading ability, and decoding skills. Other factors considered included teachers' factors such as teachers' academic and professional qualifications as well as the reading instructional methods they use when teaching reading English as a second language in Grade 4 in Ohangwena region.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

To identify the challenges that hamper learners in reading English the second language in Grade 4.

1.4.1 To assess the Grade 4 learners' abilities in phonological awareness and knowledge of alphabet.

1.4.2 To examine the reading instructional methods teachers' use when teaching reading English as a second language in Grade 4.

1.5 Research questions

The study was also guided by the following questions:

1.5.1 What are the challenges of reading in English in Grade 4 following learners' sudden shift from reading in a familiar local language?

1.5.2 What are the Grade 4 learners' abilities in phonological awareness and knowledge of alphabet?

1.5.3 What are the reading instructional methods teachers' use when teaching reading English as a second language in Grade 4?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to generate information on reading challenges faced by Grade 4 learners in English. This information would help teachers as well as curriculum specialists in devising the best reading instructional methods and materials for the

effective teaching of reading in English in Grade 4 and onwards. In addition, the study serves as a basis for curriculum reform with regard to teaching and learning English in Namibia. Finally, the results and findings of the study may help education transformation with regards to English language teaching and learning.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Literacy teaching and learning is a wide concept and as such this study could not address all areas and issues associated with such a concept. Furthermore, the study was only conducted in six primary schools from Eenhana Circuit of the Ohangwena Region and generalizing these findings to the rest of schools in the country would be quite misinforming. However, this study was conducted at this scale mainly due to its academic nature, limited time and other resource constraints. This study therefore, particularly, was focused on reading challenges and associated factors responsible for the poor reading in Grade 4 under the current teaching reading approach of the Grade 4 English syllabus.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

This study was carried out in the Eenhana circuit. It focused only, on the six schools that offered Grade 4 classes. The participants were Grade 4 learners and grade 4 teachers.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Phonological awareness: The ability to detect or manipulate the sound structure of oral language. The knowledge of the fact that words comprise individual sounds and these sounds help in the distinction of one word from another in terms of pronunciation and meaning (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Phonics: The study of the relationships between letters and their corresponding sounds; an approach to teaching the fundamentals of reading that emphasis sound letter relationships and the gateway to word recognition. Phonics-through-spelling programs teach children to transform sounds into letters to write words (Gambrell, Morrow & Pressley, 2007).

Pseudoword: A false word that is a string of letters that resembles a real word (in terms of its orthographic and phonological structure) but doesn't actually exist in the language (Schroeder, 2005).

Orthography: The system of spelling in a language (Ziegler & Goswami, 2005)

1.10 Summary

This chapter presented the orientation of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study and the significance of the study. Apart from that, this chapter also presented the limitations, delimitations of the study and the definitions of the main terms used in the study. The following chapter will present the comprehensive review of literature that relates to this study.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the theoretical and conceptual frameworks on which this study was based. This chapter also presents, discusses and reviews the relevant literature on the development of reading skills, common reading challenges that might affect reading in English and strategies for teaching reading.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by information or cognitive processing perspectives. Woolfolk (1998) states that cognitive theorists believe, for example, that learning is a result of our attempt to make sense of the world. Woolfolk (1998) further explains that the cognitive view sees people as active learners who initiate experiences, seek out information to solve problems, and organize what they already know to achieve new insights. The theoretical framework that guided this study specifically focuses on one theory, that is, the Parallel Distributed Processing Model (PDPM), which is associated with the cognitive concepts of information processing and information connectivity.

2.2.1 Parallel Distributed Processing Model

One approach to the cognitive processing perspective of reading that is receiving widespread attention is the Parallel Distributed Processing Model (PDP) (Tracey & Morrow, 2006; Rumelhart & McClelland, 1986). The PDP architecture was proposed by McClelland and Rumelhart in 1981 and there was a follow up modification of the model by Rumelhart and McClelland in 1982 (Chase & Tallal, 1990). The parallel distributed processing model is a connectionist or neural network theory of reading. It has been argued that the “Two central features of the Parallel Distributed Processing Model are (1) that all cognitive information is stored as a series of connections between units, and (2) that these connections between units become stronger and faster with repeated pairings” (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p.164). Tracey and Morrow (2006) further explain about the conceptualization of storing information in the brain as a series of connections of differing strength known as Connectionism. The concept of Connectionism applies to the strength of the associations of lines, curves, angles, and space within letter patterns.

Connections between letters and sounds is formed when letter patterns frequently occur together in words; for example, in the English language the letter *t* is frequently followed by the letter *h*, and rarely followed by the letter *q* (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p.166). According to the PDP model, as a result of the frequency of these two letters (*t* and *h*) occurring together, the connection between letter *t* and *h* is much stronger and faster than that of *t* and *q*. Consequently, during the reading process, the orthographic processor uses the strength of the connection between letters to activate letters that are

likely to follow the initially identified letter and to suppress letters that are unlikely to follow the initially identified letter (Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

In the case of the Namibian languages, e.g. Oshikwanyama they are consistent and regular in terms of phonemic (sound-related) and orthographic (spelling-related) features, but these languages sharply differ from the English language which is irregular and inconsistent in terms of those aspects which are key for the development of reading skills in Oshikwanyama.

In other words, unlike English phonic which have the correlation between spelling and sound, Oshikwanyama has a correlation between both the sound and the letter.

According to the Parallel Distributed Processing Model, the reading process begins in the orthographic processor where print recognition occurs (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Moreover, the Parallel Distributed Processing Model suggests that four primary processors that are central to the reading process are: the orthographic, the meaning, the context and the phonological processors for the identification of all letters and numbers. The second processor is the meaning processor. The meaning processor attaches meaning to the words identified in the orthographic processor (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). The third processor is the phonological processor. The phonological processor is where the sounds associated with words are processed. The fourth processor is the context processor. The context processor is where the reader constructs and monitors the meanings of phrases, sentences, paragraphs and full texts during the reading process (Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

In the Parallel Distributed Processing Model, the context processor receives and delivers information to and from the meaning processor. As a message is being constructed in the context processor, information is being shipped to the meaning processor regarding words that are likely to occur in the text (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). The two combined theories (Connectionism and Parallel Distributed Processing Model) enabled the researcher to explore reading instructional methods used for teaching reading English to Grade 4 learners in Namibia. A cognitive processing perspective on reading seeks to describe the workings of the mind during the reading process. This is the reason why this study used the Parallel Distributed Approach Model (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). This theory enabled the researcher to assess and identify the challenges that hamper learners' English as a second language proficiency in Grade 4 because this is based on the assumptions of this theory and the objectives of the study. Objective number 2 of the study is "To assess the Grade 4 learners' abilities in phonological awareness and knowledge of the alphabet." In other words abilities in phonological awareness connect with the knowledge of the alphabet. The direct implication of the model is that the knowledge of the alphabet is dependent on the abilities in phonological awareness. As a result the theory was used to derive a useful research question in addressing objective number 2, namely: "Does the learner's abilities in phonological awareness have a bearing on the learner's knowledge of the alphabet?"

2.3 Challenges that hamper English reading proficiency in general

Learning to read is one of the greatest accomplishments in childhood. Therefore it is not surprising that debates amongst educators about "how best to help children learn

to read have been heated and unsettled for many years” (Paris, 2005, p. 56). According to the SACMEQ II Report (2004), as referred to by Makuwa (2004), “Grade 4 presents a particular challenge for learners and teachers with regard to reading in Ohangwena region when learners switched from mother tongue to English as the medium of instruction.” This is challenging because learners are used to learning through their mother tongue in Grades 1-3 and many of the learners experience English as a third or fourth language (Keeves & Darmawana, 2007). Moreover, Keeves and Darmawana (2007) contend that reading presents a special challenge because from Grade 4 onwards, all learning materials are written in English and learners must be fluent readers in the English language in order to succeed at school.

The reading acquisition in many languages may vary. Different people may pronounce words differently, sometimes depending on their dialects. For example, in the Namibian context, and in particular, Oshikwanyama language, many of the people wrongly pronounce the letter /s/ for example in a word ‘*casket*’, it may be pronounced as ‘*cashket*’, with the phoneme /sh/. This means that there is a variation in the phonological representation in some languages. Similarly, Ziegler and Goswami (2005) argue that despite the similar developmental trajectory of phonological representation across many European languages, reading acquisition itself varies markedly across the very same languages. They further argue that this is attributed to some factors, such as consistency of spellings to sound relations, granularity (grain size) of orthographic and phonological representation and teaching methods.

It is likely that the three factors such as consistency of spelling to sound relations, granularity of orthographic and phonological representation and teaching methods

could be of great focus in the teaching of local languages in the first grade, but more so to the English language in the second grade. In addition, the orthography of a particular language could have an impact on phonological development, for instance in Oshikwanyama and English languages. For example in the Oshikwanyama language, there is no /ph/ phoneme such as in the word '*photograph*' in English, while in the English language there are no monographs in combination with the letter *x* with letter *w*, as in the word '*xwama*', an Oshikwanyama word for '*light up*'. As different orthographies have different rules for mapping written symbols onto sounds, the consistency of such mappings in a given language may influence how a learner's phonological awareness development proceeds (Ziegler & Goswami 2005, p. 67).

To illustrate the above, English has an opaque or a deep orthography in which the relationship between graphemes and phonemes is inconsistent and many exceptions are permitted. For example, in English, the /u/ in '*put*', '*pull*', '*cut*', '*but*', '*urban*' changes inconsistently. In Oshikwanyama the letter 'u' is always represented by only one sound, the /u/ sound, unlike in English where the letter 'u' is represented by at least three sounds, which are the /u/ sound, the /eh/ sound or the /uh/ sound. There are differences that occur between Oshikwanyama and English phonologies. For example, certain letters like *z* do not occur in the Oshikwanyama alphabet and therefore there is no phoneme representing it. It is often represented with letter *j* such that the word '*zest*' would be pronounced as '*jest*' or the word '*zeal*' may be pronounced as '*jeal*'. These sounds may be awkward to an English speaking native, particularly if the meaning of the word may seem not to correspond with the intended word.

A Report by the SACMEQ project III (2011) conducted a reading test across all regions within Namibia. The test was to assess the reading abilities of English as a Second Language learners in some selected schools in each region in Namibia. The researcher only compared results of the four Northern regions, where Eenhana circuit is found in order to find the learners' reading achievement. Equally, the comparison was also done due to the fact that in these four regions, there are many schools located in rural areas where learners seem to lack a culture of reading. The table below indicates the values that deal with reading achievement in Namibia where the Modern Item Response Theory was used to generate descriptions of "levels of increasing learner competence" in both Reading and Mathematics. This approach of "describing learner Reading and Mathematics achievement offered a mechanism for describing the performance of learners in a manner that was more meaningful within a teaching and learning context" (Amadhila, Dengeinge, Miranda, & Shikongo, 2011, p. 33). However, the table below shows only the reading achievement scored by each region, leaving out Mathematics, because the study was concerned only with the reading aspect of the fourth grade learners.

Table 1: Reading Achievements

Regions	Traditional mean reading
Ohangwena	417
Omusati	434
Oshikoto	428
Oshana	430

Sources: SACMEQ III Report, 2011.

On a yearly basis, the Ministry of Education conducts a National Standardized Achievement Test (NSAT) to assess learners' reading abilities in English from grade 5 - 7 countrywide. The challenges that learners encountered in reading English as a Second Language were stated in the 2012 report of the National Standardized Achievement Test (NSAT) for Grade 7 in Ohangwena region (MoE, 2012). The report revealed that of the 47 learners who took part in English test at national level, 45% of these learners were classified into the Below Basic Achievement category, whereby 36% of learners demonstrated insufficient knowledge and skills across all themes in the syllabus. Furthermore, 37% of learners were classified into the Basic Achievement category, which means that they demonstrated sufficient knowledge and limited skills across all themes in the syllabus. Of the 47 learners who participated in the test, 38% were classified into the Above Basic Achievement category, meaning that they demonstrated proficient knowledge and skills across all themes in the syllabus. Very few learners, about 3%, were classified into the Excellent Achievement category of demonstrating excellent knowledge and advanced skills across all themes in the syllabus (Ministry of Education, 2012). These poor results in Namibia triggered the researcher to seek to identify the challenges that fourth graders encounter in reading English second language in Eenhana circuit.

There are some factors that may determine the poor reading abilities of learners in many schools. Keeves, van der Walt, van der Berg and Botha (2007, p. 87) argue that "poor reading in English Second Language is attributed to the following factors, namely the poor school and home environment that do not support learners to master reading English as second language." In addition, some learners are likely to read by either recognizing or memorizing words without necessarily understanding them.

Hugo (2008) asserts that some learners in South Africa start their formal schooling in their home language and after three years during which English is taught to them as a Second Language (L2), the language still becomes a barrier in reading. It appears that the challenge of reading in English may be due to the fact that some children start their formal school education through the medium of English, which is their Second Language (L2). In other words, learners who firstly start learning a Second Language than their First Language are likely to encounter challenges in reading because they might lack a balanced bilingualism.

English has a hegemonic power, thus many nations, including Namibia, chose English to be used as a medium of instruction in schools, even though it is still a Second Language. This means that many teachers teach through the medium of English, which is also the teachers' Second Language (L2). As a result, both learning and teaching English may become a problem, often causing a barrier to learning. The arguments put forth by some of the scholars above is in relation to the subject under investigation in this study, which is, challenges the grade 4 learners encounter in reading English as a Second Language in Eenhana circuit in Ohangwena region. Therefore, the study assessed the grade 4 learners' abilities in phonological awareness and knowledge of the alphabet in order to find out if they can differentiate the sounds of letters.

2.4 Learners' abilities in phonological awareness and knowledge of the alphabet

Reading is a developmental skill which is influenced by a number of interacting factors. For example, phonological awareness is one such factor. By definition, phonological awareness is "an awareness of the phonological units represented by a

given writing system which is positively correlated with reading ability in every language studied to date” (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 6). Moreover, Woolley-Wade & Geva (2000) claim that awareness of the sounds of oral language is necessary “precursor to the acquisition of the alphabetic principle” (p. 11). What is yet unknown, however, is the extent to which this skill plays a similar role in learning to read in a Second Language and whether language specific factors increase levels of difficulty in literacy acquisition. What triggered the interest of the researcher in conducting research on reading is that issues of language and literacy acquisition are topical discussion points in Namibia. The lower phase of primary education is blamed for the learners’ poor reading in English, the arguments and assumptions being that the grounding in reading English second language in the foundation phase is not properly laid right from Grades 1- 4. Although this might be part of the problem, there may be other factors, for example, not all the children are immersed in the same type of supportive environment at home and school where their literacy growth can be enhanced (Keeves, van der Walt, van der Berg & Botha, 2007). An awareness of phonemes and the ability to reflect on and manipulate them increases the chances that young children will develop good decoding skills leading to success at reading from early grades (Elbro, Bostrom & Peterson, 1998). On the same point, Glazer (1998) states that phonics is the relationship between the sounds of a language and the letters used to represent them. In the classroom, phonics is the instruction that guides children to decode words using these relationships in order to learn to read. It has been agreed upon by many scholars that in order to read and also write successfully, learners must be aware of the sound/symbol relationships (Glazer, 1998).

The study conducted by Geudens (2003) on *Breaking through the rime/rain* contends that “the purpose of learning to read an alphabetic script, the learner has to find a way to translate or decode the letters into the sounds, a skill that is referred to as alphabetic coding” (p. 36). Thus, it is necessary for learners to develop a connection between both print and speech (sound).

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education (2002) observes that phonological awareness is the conscious awareness of the sounds of a language. This implies that phonology is the ability to reflect on the sounds in words separately from the meaning of words. Thus, as the alphabet represents speech sounds, the beginning reader must become aware of these sounds in order to understand how the alphabet works, but awareness of these sounds may not always be easy for young children, hence the need for systematic phonemic instruction in order to attain superior performance in reading (Ministry of Education, 2002).

Another study on phonology by Griffiths and Snowling (2002, p. 31) indicates that “orthographic awareness and phonological awareness crucially depend on one another and ultimately work in concert to help the learner break the code of an alphabetic writing system”. Furthermore, Griffiths and Snowling (2002) proffer that difficulties in acquiring phonological awareness and skills in alphabetic coding are believed to be due, in many cases, to weak phonological coding characterised by the poor quality of the underlying ‘sub-lexical phonological’ representations. It is important for teachers to note that skills of acquiring phonological awareness, and similarly the skills in alphabetic coding require intervention in order to address the status quo.

A learner who acquires the knowledge of the alphabet, phonemic awareness and the ability of reading comprehension skills is likely to progress well in his/her reading abilities without challenges. However, Droop and Verhoeven (2003, p. 46) argue that for “second language readers, it can be expected that the network of connections between the various graphemes and semantic nodes needed to read will be weakening English second language than in the mother tongue”. Opaque orthographies use more complex and inconsistent relationships between written symbols and speech sounds. The fact that the reading instruction strongly builds on oral language implies that second language speaking children may therefore experience a considerable gap.

It is essential to note that reading requires children to establish automatic, precise and redundant connections between print and speech at fine-grained, larger sub-word, and reading skills levels. Hence, curricula for learning to read should not only be observed on phonological awareness but obviously also on other relevant skills, such as the oral language ability, vocabulary, reading fluency and the development of word-specific knowledge (Griffiths & Snowling, 2002). Therefore children might be taught reading to extract and pronounce the first phonemes in words to identify the phonemes shared in different words, to segment words into phonemes, to blend phonemes to pronounce a recognizable word, or to delete phonemes from words and say the word that remain (Griffiths & Snowling, 2002).

Veii (2003) conducted a study investigating the cognitive and linguistic predictors of literacy in Namibian Herero-English bilingual school children and found that learners with literacy difficulties showed deficient phonological awareness in both Otjiherero and English. The findings of Veii (2003)’s study were consistent with the script

dependent viewpoint in that faster rates of improvement in literacy were apparent in a more transparent language (Herero) than a less transparent language (English). Thus, deficient first language (Otjiherero) phonological awareness may have negatively affected literacy development in the second language (English).

In addition, Ziegler and Goswami (2005) and Leong (2004) state that for children to acquire reading, they must learn codes used in their culture for representing speech as a form of visual symbols and learning to read is thus fundamentally a process of matching distinctive visual symbols to units of sound (phonology). Moreover, Ziegler and Goswami (2005) suggest that when developing a particular phonological awareness task, one should take into account particular orthographic characteristics in addition to specific phonological properties of the language. Thus, the utility of a phonological awareness task as a predictor of reading development varies across different languages (p. 32). On the contrary, van de Swanepoel (2009) observes that a spoken language does not require a conscious awareness of the speech sounds in words. He argues that speech is produced and understood automatically, with little conscious attention given to sounds. On the other hand, Vei (2003) asserts that a child who read in the First Language and who already has a level of phonological awareness in the First Language is more likely to perform well in the Second Language word and pseudo-word recognition tests. Conversely, a child who has some Second Language word recognition skills but low phonological awareness tends to perform poorly on the second-language transfer tests.

Among the prominent reading theories is the traditional bottom-up approach to reading there is an approach that presents reading as progressing from the processing of lower

levels of information, such as letter identification, to the processing of higher levels of information, such as the construction of the meaning of messages. In a “bottom up” model of reading, first the letters are identified, then sounds are attached to them, the word meaning is added, and finally after all the words are processed then the sentence’s meaning is understood (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). One of the methods of teaching reading associated with the bottom-up approach to reading is the *phonics methods* (Parlindungan, 2010). In this method, reading takes place letter by letter, with large units gradually being built (Crystal, 1996). This applies when the teacher uses a limited set of letters when teaching reading, for example; two, three or four letter-words. The two points presented above can apply to all languages although there could be certain peculiarities which cannot be ruled out. “First Language transfer happens particularly on a phonological level because the sound, stress and intonation pattern of the first language are carried over to the second language. This happens when Second Language learners are taught by non-First Language speakers of the Second Language” (Swanepoel, 2009, p. 117). Sometimes learners may not be aware of a letter that may represent several sounds and a particular sound that may be represented by different letters, depending on the context within which the letter or sound is represented. For example, in Oshikwanyama, learners tend to make this error in words like ‘*sport*’- ‘*spot*’, the learner knows the word but perceives the short vowel sound /o/ and the long vowel /o:/ as the same. Leong (2004) states that training in phonological skills and spelling pattern structures needs to be carried out. Furthermore, Veii and Everrat (2005) allude to the fact that although most languages have some peculiarities in the relationship between graphemes and phonemes, most have rules that connect letters with pronunciations that are more consistent and, potentially, simpler to learn than in the case of English. In most countries with regular orthographies, there is little

or no reading preparation before formal schooling (Zeigler & Goswami, 2005, p. 207). Thus, Wimmer and Landerl (2001) observe that in German kindergartens (pre-schools), there is no reading preparation at all. Equally, Zeigler and Goswami (2005) observe that in some languages, there may be fewer problems with learning to read in a more transparent orthography than a less transparent one. Furthermore, Savage, Pillay and Melidona (2008) contend that English is known to be “forward irregular and backward irregular for both reading and spelling” (p. 52). Thus, phonological decoding skills remain a major obstacle for reading and spelling in the English language for many learners who learn English as a Second Language.

Scholars such as Wimmer and Landerl (2001) argue that English pre-scholars were far superior in naming letters, words, phonological awareness and knowledge of environment print compared with matched German speakers. Additionally, Strucher (2002, p. 37) indicates that “English does not have the same level of correspondence between the sound and written form that occurs in some of the alphabetic letters”. For instance, it might be that the second language learners may find the irregular sound symbols correspondences in English troublesome as they are used to reading a one-to-one correspondence between sounds and symbols in their language. Learners need to learn the syllabic level that the combination ‘*ough*’ can be pronounced as in ‘*tough*’ and ‘*rough*’ or as in ‘*bought*’ and ‘*sought*’. Therefore, the second language learners need to learn the many pronunciations of vowels including their sounds in stressed and unstressed syllables in English (Strucher, 2002). Echoing the same sentiments, Woolley-Wade and Geva (2000, p. 40) maintain that the “accurate pronunciation of words that follow regular orthographic conventions is believed to provide a window into which phonological skills are directly applied to reading.” Moreover, Geudens

and Sandra (2002) and Morais (2003) note that the best predictors of future reading achievement are the letter knowledge, phonological awareness, short-term memory, and rapid serial naming speed, pseudo repetition and expressive vocabulary. Notwithstanding, it is essential to note that skills learned in one language are not often applicable in other languages. There are variations in many cases. As a result, in a case where a learner has no sufficient oral ability in his/her first language, it is likely that such a learner will experience difficulties in the Second Language.

A study by Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison and Lacroix (1999) and Geva (2000) emphasise that “lack of adequate experience with English sounds and patterns make the English Second Language (ESL) learner unable to recognize a sound, discriminate and use those in speech” (p. 204). This inability, in turn makes it difficult for students to sound out words in print, resulting in reading difficulties. Furthermore, Ard (1999) states that “because the role of phonological processing is highly implied in successful reading acquisition in the First Language, Second Language speakers and learners, who are likely to be experiencing radical restructuring of inter-language phonologies might be particularly at risk for unstable phonological representation”, hence, the difficulty in reading and spelling. Moreover, Bialystok (1999) argues that in a case where literacy in the home is a home language until children start school, and where the objective is transition from Home Language to the school language for all further educational purposes, it is very likely that once literacy in the latter (school) is attained, it seems to be implicitly accepted that most of those who do not speak the school language at home, in comparison to those who do, will remain permanently retarded in education.

Liow and Lau (2006) observe that although it is clear that phonemic knowledge is used for reading and spelling by kindergarten (pre-schools) learners in North America, the same might not be true for bilingual English speaking children elsewhere. They further suggest that “the influence of a child’s home language on English literacy development is not unitary, and cross-linguistic transfer could have negative as well as positive consequences” (p. 73).

2.5 Instructional Methods Teachers use in Teaching Reading

There are various instructional methods applied in the teaching of reading and writing in Grade 4 in Namibian classrooms to overcome the challenges in reading English Second Language (Ministry of Education, 2005). Some of these instructional methods are stipulated in the language syllabus. The choice of each of these instructional reading methods is guided by a number of factors like age and the grade of learners and the linguistic structure of the language involved (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Some of these instructional reading methods are stipulated in the language syllabus, such as the Whole language Approach, the Phonic Method, The Look and say or the Whole word method and the Language experience Approach (Ministry of Education, 2005). However, the question of which is the most effective continues to concern many teachers in Namibia. Furthermore, Mutenda (2008) states that some of the teachers do not vary their methods of teaching reading and that their monotonous style does not stimulate learners to learn. It is highly likely that the teachers who teach learners in that way (monotonous style), are not responsive to the demands and needs of the present day situation. Wimmer (1993, pp.131-133) states that by “using an eclectic

approach to teaching young learners, teachers are directly and indirectly developing reading skills in their learners.” This strategy applies a bottom-up approach which includes phonics and ‘look and say’ and a top-down strategy, that are all composed of extensive reading, contextualization and pictorial clues. Some methods that have shown success in some countries in teaching reading are summarised below:

2.5.1 Phonics

Phonics is a method whereby “the speech is broken into individual sounds and represented letters” (Alderson, 2000, p. 132). Phonics teaches the correspondence between letters and the sounds they represent. Conclusions from many scholarly works indicate that phonics instruction is important for many children in the earliest grades and Perfetti and Zhang (1996), agree that the ability to understand phonological (the sound system) concepts associated with our language is important for reading.

In addition, the use of phonics in Grade 4 is meant as an aid to English pronunciation, should learners have problems with words. Hence, children are taught to look at individual letters or groups of letters, recognise the sounds and blend letters to form a fluent sound, for example, in the word *cat*, children are taught that the sound represented by the word ‘*cat*’ are /k/ which is a glottal sound, then /ei/ and /t/ which constitutes /k-a-t/. According to Lerner (2000), there are two approaches to teaching phonics. In the first approach is analytical phonics, where learners are taught to look initially at the whole word and then break it down to compare parts for the letter-sound relationships they came across previously. Whereas in the synthetic phonics, learners are taught to link an individual letter or a letter combination with its appropriate sound

then blend the sound to form words. Thus, learners are systematically taught letters of the alphabet and the combination of letters used to represent each sound, for example the combination of letters 'c-a-t-t-l-e' gives the word 'cattle'.

2.5.2 The look and say or whole-word method of reading

According to Levine (1994), the 'look and say' or whole-word method of reading teaches children to read through pattern recognition rather than decoding the word into letters. In the 'look and say' method, learners are taught to recognise whole words or sentences rather than individual sounds. Flashcards with words and an accompanying picture are often used with the 'look and say' method, until they memorise the pattern of letters, words and sentences as a way to help in building up high-frequency sight vocabulary. In Grade 4, teachers write words from a passage either on the chalkboard or on the flashcard for learners to read or repeat after the teacher and give the meaning of the word. For example, the picture of a house is given to learners without the accompanying letter representing it. Learners are asked to say what they see and name it, after which the teacher places the letter string (*h-o-u-s-e*) beneath the picture. The activities can be extended to other objects like 'hat' or 'handbag' that begins with the same letter sound, and even to sentences.

2.5.3 Combining phonics and whole-language in teaching reading

Proponents of combining the phonics and whole-language approaches, Reutzel and Cooter (2010), Stanovich (1980) and Rumelhart (1977), suggest that phonics have to be taught separately, directly and systematically to learners, and not in the context of

reading literature. Reutzel and Cooter (2010) believe that learning to read is accomplished by placing the emphasis on mastering the three skill areas of decoding, vocabulary and comprehension, which are assumed to lead to competent understanding, and consequently enable skilled and independent reading.

Moreover, Rumelhart (1977) claims that while processing features of letters and spelling patterns, at the same time a reader is also attending to the general context, syntax, and the semantic and syntactic environment in which the words occur. However, Stanovich (1980) posits that for learners to master reading skills, they need daily exposure to good literature through reading aloud, discussing stories, and being introduced to new knowledge and vocabulary.

Most Namibian children do not share this ‘culture of power’, as many of the learners particularly those from rural areas come from homes with a paucity of literature and they are therefore not exposed to print materials like story books, newspapers or magazines, exposure to which helps learners to learn how to read. Often many of the rural parents are economically disadvantaged and they often cannot afford to buy reading books for them to read (SACMEQ Report, 2004). Phonics should be taught first, followed by regular reading practice so that learners become skilled readers.

2.6 Choosing Appropriate Reading Instructional Methods

Experts in reading agree that there is no best method to teaching reading, thus Lerner (2000) and Goodman (1990) oppose the phonics method, believing it to be less engaging, with endless sounds to learn and simple books to read using regular words.

Both Lerner and Goodman (1990) assert that children like to read books by themselves. In line with the assertion above, it is vital that beginner learners should be exposed to a variety of reading materials to practice reading on their own. Goodman (1990) supports the whole language method to reading, believing that it can produce learners who understand the meaning of the words they are reading and so tackle more interesting books early on. However, Lerner (2000) and Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) criticise the whole language method to reading for leaving learners guessing when faced with an unfamiliar word and for the limited number of words they can memorise.

While it is evident that teacher training institutions prepare student teachers in all the approaches and the methods and techniques outlined in this chapter, it has been observed in some studies (Hartney, 2011; Junias, 2009), that once these student teachers graduate and are in the field they hardly follow them. In addition, in the case of teaching reading skills, particular attention is needed in preparing learners to acquire reading skills so that numerous reading difficulties are avoided. Thus, Schroeder (2005) argues that “reading instruction depends in part on the teacher’s knowledge and effective use of instructional methods (p. 22). In the same vein, Schroeder (2005) also notes that when the teachers are not fluent in English and African languages, they make mistakes in teaching reading. Mutenda (2008) contends that the whole language approach aims at a progressive, systematic acquisition of reading and writing skills. Furthermore, Wong (1998) states that teachers should first teach awareness of the sound (phonic) system and then they should anchor the printed letter (grapheme) to the sound knowledge. In the ‘look and say’ method, learners are taught to recognise whole words or sentences, rather than individual sounds. Hence, learners look at a

word which the teacher reads and in turn repeats the word (Ministry of Education, 2005). So, teachers' knowledge both in content and methodology is of great importance if the teaching of the two language media is to succeed. It is thus clear that reading instructions depend in part on the teacher's knowledge and effective use of instructional methods. It is not known whether teachers in Eenhana circuit apply all these approaches, methods and techniques in their reading lesson delivery to establish possible challenges of reading which learners face. This study has identified this as one aspect whether teachers used the appropriate reading instructional methods in their teaching reading English.

2.7 English in the Namibian School Curriculum

In 1990, Namibia decided to have a new language policy for schools, the goal of which was a "seven-year primary education phase that enables learners to acquire reasonable competencies in English and be prepared for English as a medium of instruction throughout the Secondary Phase and beyond" (MBESC, 2003). Thus, the MBESC (2003) adopted a language policy that would guide how the language issues would be handled in education in Namibia. The benchmarks set by the language policy are that:

- Grade 1-3 will be taught in the mother tongue or predominant language in the surrounding community. If parents or the school wish to use English as the medium of instruction in the Lower Primary Phase, permission must be obtained from the Ministry.
- Grade 4 will be the transitional year when the change to English as a medium of instruction must take place.

- Grade 5-7 English will be the medium of instruction. In the Upper Primary Phase the mother tongue may only be used in a supportive role and continue to be taught as a subject.
- Grade 8-12 will be taught through the medium of English and the mother tongue will continue to be taught as a subject.
- Examinations: grade 7, 10 and 12 national examinations will be taken through the medium of English, except the mother tongue which will continue to be taught as a subject.
- English is a compulsory subject starting from grade 1 and continuing throughout the school system.
- All learners must study two languages as subjects at grade 1 onwards, and one must be English (p. 5).

2.8 Language Policy for Primary Schools in Namibia

The threshold hypothesis suggests that a child's Second Language competence is partly dependent on the competence already achieved in the First Language (Baker, 2006, p. 176). With regards to academic language requirements, Baker (2006) notes the distinction between the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), a face-face context embedded situation that provides non-verbal support to secure understanding, and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), which appears in the context-reduced academic situations. This helps explain the relative failure in the education system of many Second Language children (p. 176). Furthermore, Baker (2006) stresses that if the transition from the home language to the

Second Language is not well monitored, it may result in many learners being in classrooms in which the cognitively demanding language is beyond their grasp.

In the Namibian context, BICS may be applicable to grade 1-3, when instruction takes place in the mother tongue and English is taught as a subject. This means that in these grades, simple English language that provides non-verbal support is used to facilitate understanding of reading English as a Second Language. On the other hand, CALP would be associated with Grade 4 and upwards, where English is used as the medium of instruction. In other words, the experience of learners with the CALP may imply that in line with the requirement of the Grade 4 syllabus, learners are expected to be sufficiently proficient in English as a medium of instruction to face the academic demands in the Upper Primary and beyond. However, according to Lerner (2000, p. 117), “the maturation view stresses that forcing younger children to perform academic tasks for which they are not ready, such as reading, should constitute a form of child abuse.”

2.8.1 The intention and goals of the language policy

The adoption of English as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards resulted in Afrikaans being replaced with English as the new medium of instruction. The goals of the language policy are explained in the Namibian Language Policy document (MBESC, 2003) as follows:

- The seven-year primary education cycle should enable learners to acquire reasonable competence in English, the official language, and prepare them for English as medium of instruction throughout the secondary cycle.

- Education should promote the language and cultural identity of learners through the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in Grades 1-3 and the teaching of mother tongue throughout formal education.
- Grade 4 is a transitional year in which the mother tongue plays a supportive role in teaching. The mother tongue should be taught as a subject (MBESC, 2003, p. 3).

The studies by Legere (1996), MBESC (1996) and MBESC (2005) emphasise that the goals of the language policy, especially in the Lower Primary phase (Grade 1-3), are to teach learners with the mother tongue as the medium of instruction and English as a subject. Thus, the purpose of English as a Second Language in Grades 1-3 is to prepare for the transition to English as a medium of instruction in Grade 4. Similarly, the purpose of English as Second Language in Grade 4 is “to provide a careful transition from teaching or learning in the home language to teaching and learning through the medium of English” (MBESC, 2005, p. 49). However, the National Language Policy for Schools is specifically concerned with language transition throughout the Lower Primary grades. Moreover, the policy recommends the use of the mother tongue from grades 1-3 in order to lay a strong foundation for skills transfer.

2.9 Stages of Reading Development

A number of studies in the area of reading, for example, those conducted by Chall (1987); Dickson and Neuman (2006) and Lerner (2000) observe the difficulties encountered when learning to read in English when it is not a first language. Although these studies were conducted outside Namibia, they have a direct bearing on teaching

and learning to read in English because English remains a Second Language to many people and Namibia is no exception, particularly in rural areas where learners hardly communicate in the Second Language, but prefer to converse in their Home Language. Learning to read is like running a race that needs to be carefully prepared. Chall (1987) identified six stages of reading development, from pre-reading, an early stage known as ‘logographic reading’, which is the earliest stage in which young children begin to recognize the limited vocabulary of whole words using incidental cues such as logo, a picture, a colour or a shape, through early literacy to mature fluent reading. To prepare a learner to read, there are some stages that teachers need to know in preparing learners to master reading abilities in English. The Reading Development (2011) presents the following four stages:

2.9.1 Stage 1: Learning to read

This stage begins when children are four to five years old and beginning to learn letters. The central focus is on decoding meaning, learning the alphabet and the sounds that letters make, learning to distinguish sounds in speech, and learning to sound out words. Thus, at this stage, children establish a foundation for a lifelong relationship with books. Researchers such as Lerner (2000) and Dickson and Neuman (2006) reveal that children who are exposed to books in their early years learn to read more easily.

2.9.2 Stage 2: Developing independent reading

This stage begins when children achieve fluency in beginners’ reader books, usually during Grade 2. The focus during this stage is on a large amount of reading in books

at an appropriate level of difficulty. Moat (1994, p. 53) argues that children need “knowledge of sound-symbol associations and abundant practice to contribute to fluency in word recognition.” At this stage, reading practice and skills development are both primarily focused on fluency development as learners start to decode words of three or more syllables.

2.9.3 Stage 3: Reading with absorption

This stage begins when children achieve fluency in children’s novels, usually in Grade 3 or 4. The focus is on reading development about the reading of children’s novels at gradually increasing levels of difficulty. This process enables learners to “develop a certain level of fluency and comprehension, and automaticity in reading as a basis for more than just the habit of reading for pleasure” (Chall, 1987, p. 61). When children gain fluency, it lays the basis for all subsequent reading development to the next grade.

2.9.4 Stage 4: Critical reading

At this stage, children undergo transformation in physical, emotional, and cognitive changes starting in middle school and continuing throughout high school and into adulthood. These changes bring, in their wake, a new cognitive capability that first appears in the middle school and continues to grow throughout the secondary and post-secondary years.

According to Wixon and Lipson (1997), when a child who has achieved the goal of Stage 3 of reading development enters Stage 4, the opportunity exists for much more

effective reading processes to develop. A child with a strong reading background who reads with a solid level of fluency and comprehension will experience relatively automatic and accurate fluency of understanding while reading. However, training is required for critical reading to become most useful, i.e. “students become cognized of what they read and have developed the ability to recognise how material is organised, the ability to monitor comprehension and adjust reading rate or reread when necessary” (Moat, 1994, p. 56).

Many studies have been conducted on the reading difficulties experienced by Lower Primary learners in Namibia. For instance, Junias (2009) focused on the factors affecting the teaching of reading skills and the methods and approaches that were used to promote the teaching of reading in English as a second language to Grade 3 learners in Namibia.

Junias (2009) found that poor teaching methods, insufficient reading books, teachers’ and learners’ interactions and overcrowded classrooms were some of the main factors that made the teaching of reading unsuccessful. Junias (2009) also revealed that inadequate teacher training workshops for English teachers, lack of parental involvement, low budget allocation to primary education and lack of reading capacity in the vernacular affected the teaching of reading negatively. Lack of phonemic awareness and lack of comprehension also created reading problems (Junias, 2009).

Mutenda’s (2008) study looked at teaching reading in the Grade 4 Namibian classroom. Mutenda (2008) found that some of the teachers do not vary their methods of teaching reading and that their monotonous style does not stimulate learners to learn

(Mutenda, 2008). On the other hand, Vei's (2003) study examined the cognitive and linguistic predictors of literacy in Namibian Herero-English bilingual school children (Vei, 2003). The study found that learners with literacy difficulties showed deficient phonological awareness in both Otjiherero and English.

None of these studies addressed the challenges the fourth grade learners encounter in reading English second language. Thus, the current study sought to examine the challenges the fourth grade learners encounter whilst reading in English second language in six primary schools in Ohangwena region.

2.10 Summary

Chapter Two focused on the literature review. This chapter presented the theoretical framework underpinning this study and helped in setting a clear picture of what are the challenges that hamper English reading proficiency particularly in Grade 4 classrooms. The chapter looked at various instructional methods related to teaching of reading in Namibia and internationally. Furthermore, the chapter also looked at the learners' stages of reading development, learners' abilities in phonological awareness and knowledge of alphabet. The chapter also reviewed literature on choosing appropriate reading instructional methods, English in the Namibian school curriculum, language policy for primary schools in Namibia, the intention and goals of the language and finally the stages of reading development.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGNS

3.1 Introduction

The main focus of this chapter is to describe the methods that were used in collecting and analyzing the data. These include the research design, the population, the sampling techniques, the research instruments, research methods such as interviews, observation, questionnaires, single word reading test, pseudo-word reading test, tests of phonological awareness, pilot study, data collecting procedures, elimination of bias and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

A mixed research method (both qualitative and quantitative approaches) was used in this study for the purposes of an in depth understanding of the phenomenon under study and in order to gather the necessary data that answers the research questions. Creswell and Plano Clark, (2011) argue that the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a better understanding of the research problems than the use of a single method in a study. The quantitative part of the study used a correlation research design in establishing the relation between challenges that can affect reading ability, and the qualitative aspect of the study used a phenomenological research design to observe and interview teachers on the experiences in teaching reading in English.

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016, p. 723) describe phenomenology as interpretivism research that focuses on the participants' lived experiences. In this case the study focused on the teachers' lived experiences with regards to teaching reading and the challenges learners encounter. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual and usual ways of perceiving. Epistemologically, phenomenological approaches are based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and emphasise the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. This was relevant to this study due to the fact that the Grade Four teachers provided their experiences about teaching reading to the Grade Four learners through the conducted interviews. Supporting the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods, Creswell (2014 p.14) explains that the integration of quantitative and qualitative data maximise the strengths and minimises the weaknesses of each type of data.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedures

There are basically two approaches to sampling, namely probability and non-probability sampling. In probability sampling, "each unit of the population has a probability of being selected as a unit of the sample" (Panneerselvam, 2009, p.192). In non-probability sampling, "there may be instances that certain units of the population will have a zero probability of selection since biases and convenience of interviewers are considered to be the criteria for the selection of the sample" (Panneerselvam, 2009, p.192). Since this study adopted the mixed-method research methodology, both probability and non-probability sampling were used to select the samples.

The sample of the study consisted of 48 learners. 8 learners were randomly selected from each of the 6 selected primary schools in Eenhana Circuit. The next stage involved stratification of the population into two homogeneous groups namely teachers and learners. In each stratum, simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample. In using a Simple Random Sampling (SRS) technique, the research numbered the population of teachers from 1 to 20 and used the random function (=rand between (1, 20)) in excel in selection the sample of 6 teachers. The same approach was employed in the selection of learners.

The six schools were randomly selected from 20 schools that offer English as a second language. Six Grade Four teachers, one from each of the six selected schools were selected using a purposive sampling strategy. Saunders et al. (2016, p.713) define convenience sampling as a non-probability sampling approach which focuses on selecting research participants that are easy to reach. In the study, the Grade Four teachers were considered to be rich sources of data on English reading since they experienced the phenomenon daily.

3.4 Research Instruments

The adoption of mixed methods in this study entailed using different kinds of data collection instruments to gather information, namely, protocol of the interviews, questionnaires, observation check list and tests items.

3.4.1 Interviews method

The Grade Four teachers were interviewed on the challenges faced by Grade Four learners in reading English. The interviews were semi-structured. According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), a semi-structured interview is open, allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview flowing from what the interviewee says.

The semi-structured interview guide provides a clear set of instructions for interviewers and it can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data. The researcher used the semi-structured interview data collection method because in this type of interview, questions can be prepared ahead of time. Semi-structured interviews allow informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

3.4.2 Observation method

Observation, particularly participant observation, has been used in a variety of disciplines as a tool for collecting data about people, processes, and cultures in qualitative research (Kawulich, 2005). The researcher used an Observation checklist to observe how the teachers apply the reading instructional methods to teach English. As part of data collection, classroom observations were also conducted by the researcher to establish the following:

- (i) Whether the teachers use particular methods of reading instruction or not;
- (ii) How do they use the methods; and

(iii) The frequency of use for each variant of methods of reading instruction.

Specific aspects of the reading instructional methods observed included (a) the particular reading instruction methods used; (b) how teachers use the reading instruction methods and (c) the frequency of use of the variants of methods of reading instruction. The researcher sat in the class, quietly observing and recording what was happening which was of interest to the research.

The researcher observed six Grade Four English reading lessons, specifically focusing on the teaching methodologies and the appropriateness of the teaching and learning materials used in reading lessons. The reason was to understand why the Grade Four learners found it difficult to read in English. These data were expected to inform the researcher on whether the teachers applied reading instructional methods as they were supposed to be applied in teaching reading. Observation guide sheets were drawn up in line with the research questions which provided guidance on the recording of the data and later in the data analysis.

3.4.3 Questionnaires

The study used self-administered questionnaires with both closed and open-ended questions given to six Grade Four teachers. Semi-structured questionnaires were answered by the teachers. The questionnaires were constructed by the researcher.

3.4.4 Single Word Reading Test

The first test was a single word reading test of 70 single and multi-syllabic words to assess the learners' reading ability in terms of recognizing and naming correctly individually written words. A single word reading test was individually administered to the randomly selected Grade Four learners. The single word reading test was adopted from Vei (2003). The researcher constructed an English word reading test from the simplest word to the most difficult one (e.g. "eat", "look", "breakfast" and "systematic"). In the reading test, the researcher wanted to establish the learners' reading abilities (e.g. could the learners identify and read the single words and how many out of the total single words could they read correctly). A qualitative observation of the single word reading test was also carried out to see the nature of the errors the learners would make. Particular errors the researcher wanted to focus on included: substitution of visually similar letters when identifying letters, automatic pronunciation of words, sounding out words with difficulty (or with ease), self-correction of errors by learners (this behaviour would give information on whether the learner knows s/he has made a mistake s/he would need to correct), losing a place on the page while reading, and addition, omission, or transposing of syllables when reading single words.

3.4.5 Pseudo-word reading test

The second test was a pseudo word reading test consisting of 10 pronounceable letter strings that did not occur within the English language to assess the learners' knowledge of letter-sound relationship (Gambrell, Morrow & Pressley, 2007); Everatt

& Vei, 2005). That is, this test assessed whether or not learners can decode new and unknown words using their knowledge of the relationship between phonemes and graphemes.

The pseudo-word reading test was also adapted from a study by Vei (2003). The English non-words test was constructed by substituting one letter of a common and frequently occurring word with another letter, either at the beginning or in the middle of the word, or by reversing letters in the word, but making sure that the letter strings produced remained phonetically readable and pronounceable. This test was also used as a measure of how well the learners responded to the teachers' approach of teaching reading in English. If the teachers used the phonics method, for example, and they did it correctly, the learners should be able to decode unknown words with ease. Their ability to decode unknown words should translate into their ability to read single words and, ultimately, full sentences and paragraphs.

3.4.6 Tests of phonological awareness

The test on phonological awareness was adopted from a study by Vei (2003). A test assessing the learners' prerequisite skills such as sound knowledge, phonological awareness (e.g. syllabic awareness, phonemic awareness, and onset-rime awareness and non-word repetition) was also administered individually to each child participating in the study. There were 10 trials in both the English beginning test and ending phoneme test. Each trial consisted of a string of three words, two of which possessed the same initial phoneme (e.g. 'wait/vet/wet' for beginning phoneme and 'puff/buzz/huff' for ending phoneme). The purpose of these tests was to establish

whether or not the learners possessed the necessary prerequisite skills to learn to read, so as to eliminate or include the possibility of poor reading being inherent in the children or external to them. If the learners demonstrate sufficient prerequisite skills to learn to read but despite possessing these prerequisite skills still face difficulties in learning to read, then the explanation for their poor reading skills should be elsewhere (e.g. teacher factors). Other tests were also used to assess the learners' phonological awareness, for example assessing the learners' knowledge of word segmentation and blending of phonemes and syllables. Other measures used for this study included verbal short-term memory of 12 forward and 12 reverse digit span. A sound discrimination test consisting of pairs of 20 words, 10 of the words being the same (e.g. *'bad and bad'*) and the other 10 being different but sounding almost the same (homophones; e.g. *"bad"* and *"bed"*) was also used to assess whether learners could judge if words sounded the same or differently. Rapid naming tests consisting of line drawings of familiar objects and colours were used on two different stimulus cards in a mixed array that included repetitions of items and producing a total of 40 colours and 40 line drawings. There were four distinct items in each task: the line drawing of a cow, a ball, a clock and a house; colours red, green, yellow and blue. The purposes of the English rapid automatized naming tasks have been used to assess an individual's ability to rapidly or automatically access a known phonological form from a word lexicon (Veii& Everrat, 2005).

3.5 Construction of the Questionnaire

Kumar (2014, p.149) provides guidelines on how to construct research instruments which are reasonable. The following aspects of the questionnaire should be given

attention: the wording of the questionnaire; planning of the issues with regards to how the variables will be categorised and coded after receipt of the responses; and the general appearance of the questionnaire. The authors warn against double-barreled, ambiguous, leading, recall dependent, loaded and socially desirable questions (Kumar, 2014, p.149). Following these guidelines, the questionnaire was divided into sections in line with the research questions. The first section contained questions on biographic data.

3.6 Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study in Eenhana Circuit. The pilot sample was homogeneous to the schools actually used for the study. Two schools were used for piloting purposes. A total of 16 learners (8 boys and 8 girls per school) and two teachers were used during the pilot study. Questionnaires, interviews, observations and tests were administered to teachers and learners to determine the deficiencies in the research instruments and to bring about improvements in the research instruments (Depoy & Gitling, 2011). No adjustments were made since there was no evidence of deficiencies in the instruments, based on the Cronbach alpha test value of 0.84 for the reliability of questionnaire test items.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher distributed tests to respondents and administered them after school hours to learners, and each learner was allocated an average of 15 minutes to complete each test. For the six schools, it took twelve days to complete the reading tests. Scoring

and error identification was conducted during the reading activity and it ensured that errors were recorded promptly. The researcher presented each set of three words orally to the learners who had to identify the word with the different initial sound for the beginning phoneme, and also to identify the word with a different final sound in the ending phoneme test. The performance was measured on the basis of the number of correct responses. A brief exercise was done before all the test items were administered to ensure that learners understood what was expected from them. A pseudo-word decoding test of about 10 non-words was administered individually to each learner in the study to see how well learners could decode unknown words. The duration of the test was one minute per child and it took 48 minutes to conduct the test with all the 48 learners.

Data gathered from teachers was collected using questionnaires which were distributed to teachers through the school principal's office and respondents were requested to complete the questionnaires in five working days and return them to the principal's office. Lesson observations were carried out on one teacher per day, and appointments for the observations were made in advance. Lesson observation took six days. Only one observation per teacher was made due to time constraints; the instruments were many and the observer was also a full-time teacher. Interviews with teachers were conducted face-to-face and a recording device was used to capture the data. Interviews were conducted after school hours to avoid interference with normal work schedules. One respondent was interviewed per day and it took six days to complete the interviews.

3.8 Data Analysis

Nigatu (2012) contends that data analysis is the process of making sense of data. According to Nigatu (2012), this involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read. Nigatu (2012) further argues that data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, and between description and interpretation. Data collected from interviews with teachers were analysed qualitatively using thematic data analysis. Open-ended entries from teachers' questionnaires were also analysed qualitatively by assigning themes. Field notes from observations were scrutinised to cross-validate the findings.

Data from reading tests, the pseudo word reading test, tests of phonological awareness as well as data from the closed questions in the teachers' questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme in order to find out means, ranges, frequencies, and percentages, and also to do cross-tabulations, as well as establish how these variables impacted the learners' reading abilities. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to establish the relationship between different reading variables. The results from the interviews with teachers were assigned themes to validate and cross-check with other results that emerged from all data collection instruments, thereby subjecting them to the mixed method used.

3.9 Elimination of Bias

Penwarden (2013, p.1) defines bias in research as errors or flaws which can be caused by researcher weaknesses or different aspects of the study methodologies. Penwarden (2013, p.1) identifies many types of biases and notes that the approaches to the elimination of bias depend on the type of study. In this study, surrogate information bias was addressed through arranging the questionnaire according to research questions. Furthermore, the pilot test ensured that the questionnaire addressed all the research questions. Sampling bias was addressed through the use of systematic random sampling which gave all respondents an equal chance of being chosen (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

To maintain the ethical principles of the study, the researcher obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the Centre for Postgraduate Studies of the University of Namibia, while permission was obtained from the regional director of education through the inspector of education of Eenhana Circuit and selected schools where the study was conducted. This was done through written letters to all the schools that were in the scope of the study (see attached appendices 1-4). The content of the informed consent form clearly stated the purpose, significance and the voluntary nature of the study. The researcher clearly explained to the parents of the participants, in writing, that the identity of the respondents would be kept anonymous, and consent to that effect was sought and obtained. The participants were informed that the results of the study were going to be confidentially kept and they were for study purposes only. De

Vos et al. (2009) identify the following ethics which should be observed when conducting research and these are explained below:

De Vos et al. (2009, p.58) identify two forms of harm, namely, physical and emotional or psychological. All questions on the research activity should not cause any form of harm, and according to De Vos et al. (2009, p.58), the researcher has the responsibility to protect research subjects from harm.

In this study, any sensitive issues were left out to so as to protect respondents from emotional and psychological harm. Attempts were made to minimise cases of discomfort and a high degree of anonymity was maintained to protect subjects from external enquiries.

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012, p. 230), adequate information about the research, advantages and disadvantages and challenges of the study should be openly disclosed to the subjects. The subjects can then make informed decisions on whether to participate or not.

De Vos et al. (2009, p.59) also emphasise that informed consent is justifiable when all the information concerning the research has been revealed. In this study an open forum which allowed discussion was created to enable subjects to give voluntary consent to take part in the study.

The three ethical attributes namely, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity are closely related. According to De Vos et al. (2009, p. 61), “privacy implies the element of

personal privacy while confidentiality indicates the handling of information in a confidential manner.” Sieber (as stated in De Vos et al. 2009, p. 61), views confidentiality as a continuation of privacy, “which refers to agreements between persons that limit others’ access to private information”. On the other hand, maintaining anonymity of information ensures privacy (De Vos et al., 2009, p. 61).

In this study, the three ethical areas were observed through keeping the information on subjects private and confidential, and not indicating any form of identification on research instruments. The information collected from the various instruments, namely the questionnaires, interviews, observation, single words test, pseudo-word test, as well as phonological awareness tests will be kept for three years and destroyed after that.

3.11 Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology used, which is directed by research questions within the framework of the correlation research design. The chapter also presented the sampling procedures and research instruments employed, and explained how they were constructed; the elimination of bias as well as the ethical considerations of the study. The next chapter presents, discusses, analyses and interprets data.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, findings from the teachers' questionnaires, classroom observations, teachers' interviews schedule and learners' reading ability in single word reading, pseudo word reading and phonological processing skills are presented. The purpose of the study was to find out the challenges grade 4 learners encounter in reading English second language and to examine the reading instructional methods teachers use when teaching reading in English as a second language in the Eenhana circuit. The findings of this study are presented statistically in tables, graphs, means, standard deviations, and percentages. The findings of this study are guided by the research objectives as indicated in Chapter 1, which are as follows:

- a) To identify the challenges that hamper learners' English reading proficiency as a Second Language in Grade 4.
- b) To examine the reading instructional methods teachers' use when teaching reading English as a Second Language in Grade 4.
- c) To assess the Grade 4 learners' abilities in phonological awareness and knowledge of alphabet.

4.2 Teachers' Biographical Information

Figure 1: Teachers' age

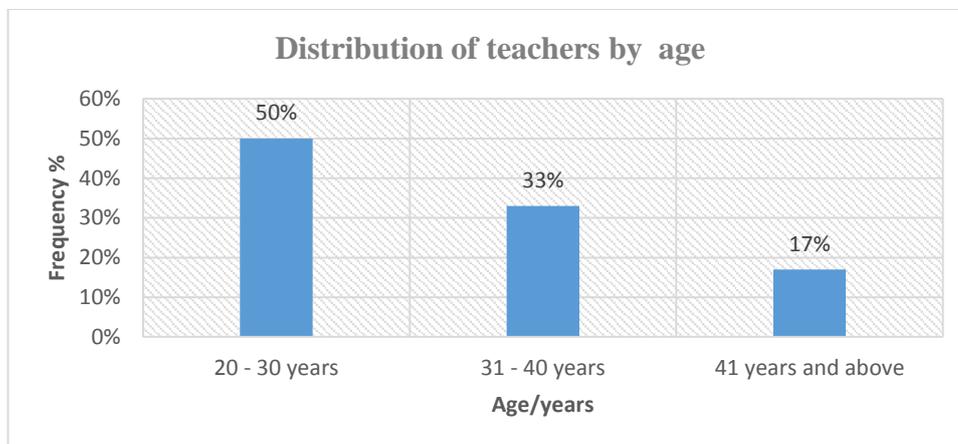
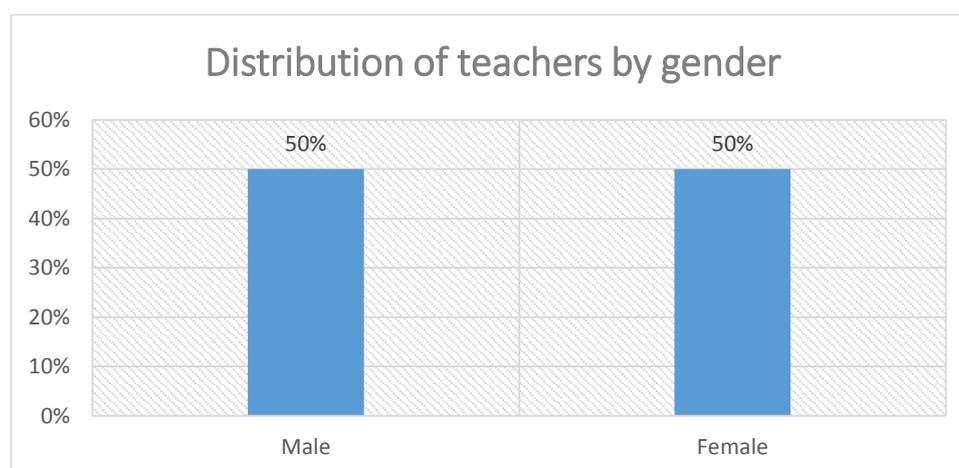


Figure 1 above indicates that six teachers participated in the study. The majority constituting three teachers, which is (50%) of the respondents, were aged between 20 to 30 years, followed by two teachers constituting (33%) of the respondents, who were aged between 31 to 40 years. Only one teacher constituting (17%) was aged above 40 years.

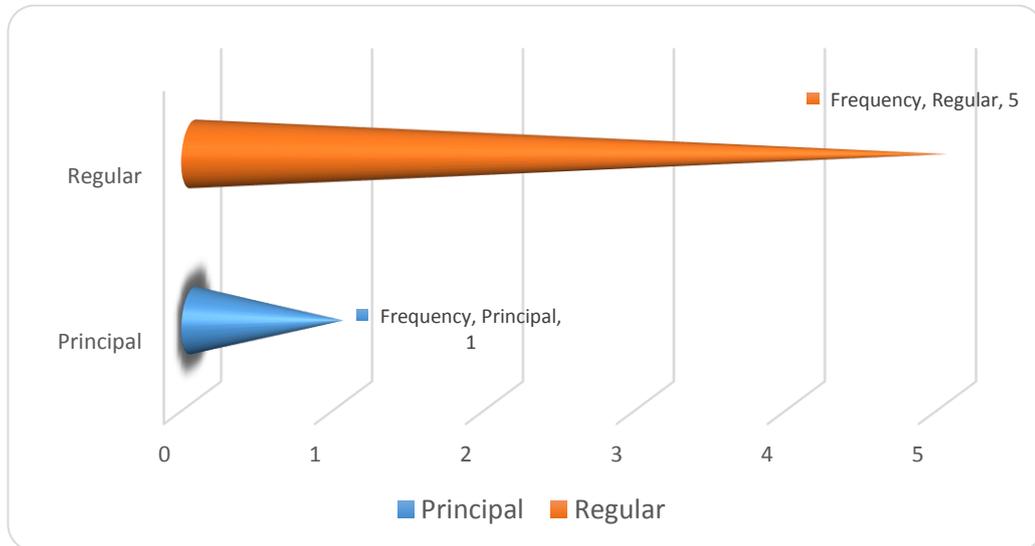
Figure 2: Teachers' gender



Six teachers participated in the study, three teachers, constituting (50%) of the respondents that participated in the study were male and the other three participants

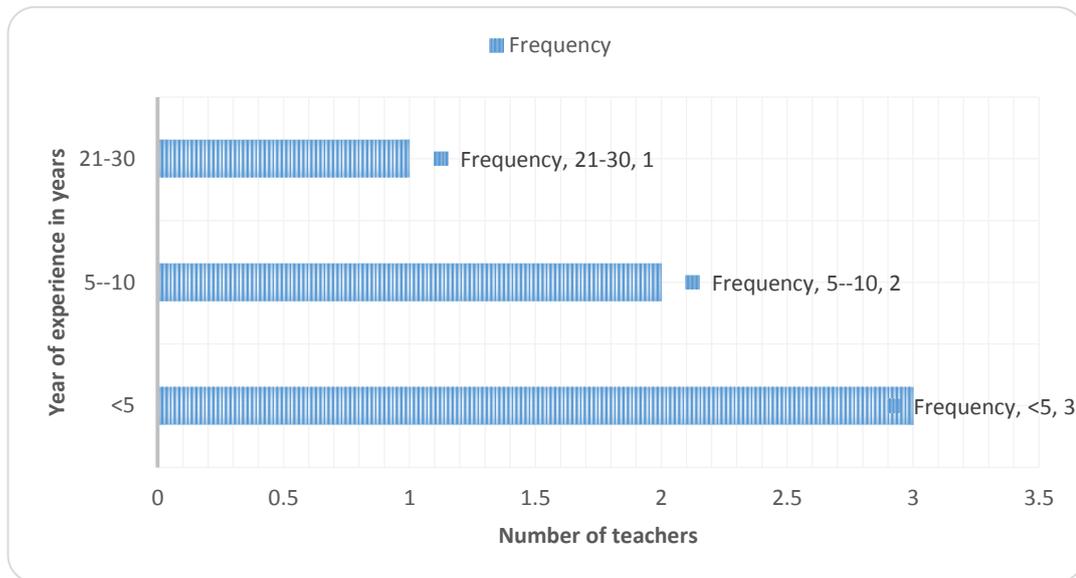
constituting (50%) were female. The choice of gender balance on the sample was subjective to avoid gender bias on data and information collected from teachers.

Figure 3: Teachers' position



Of the six teachers, only one held the position of a principal. None of the participants held the position of an HOD.

Figure 4: Teaching experience in teaching English



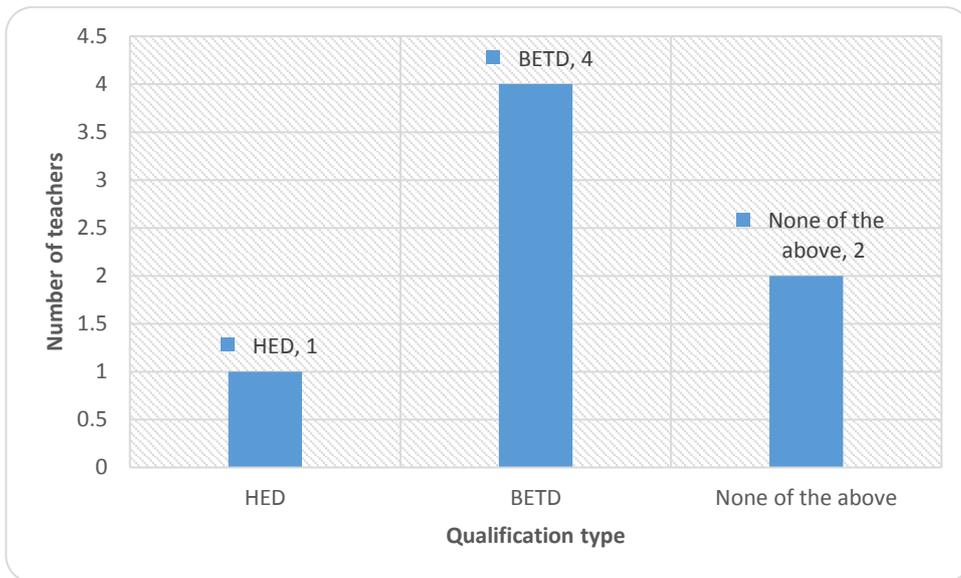
Six teachers participated in the study. As far as experience in teaching English at Lower Primary school is concerned, 17% of the respondents had 21-30 years of experience in teaching English, 33% had 5-10 years of experience in teaching English and 50% had less than five (5) years of experience in teaching English.

Figure 5: Teachers highest academic qualification



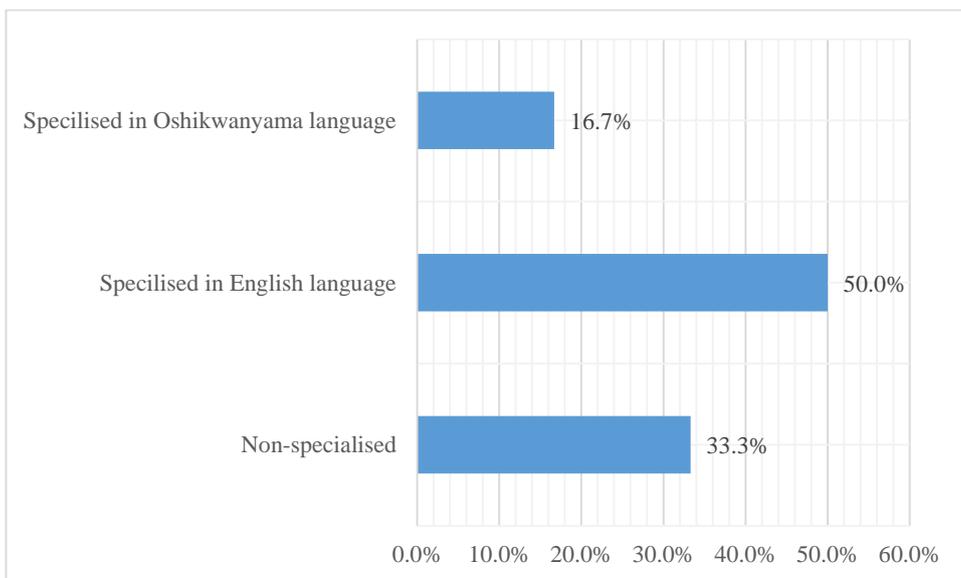
Figure 5 above shows that all six teachers who participated in the study have Grade 12 as their highest academic qualification.

Figure 6: Teachers professional qualification



Six teachers participated in the study. Of the six teachers, 14% had High Education Diploma (HED), 57% had Basic of Education Teachers' Diploma (BETD) and 29% had no professional qualification. They only teach with Grade 12 certificate.

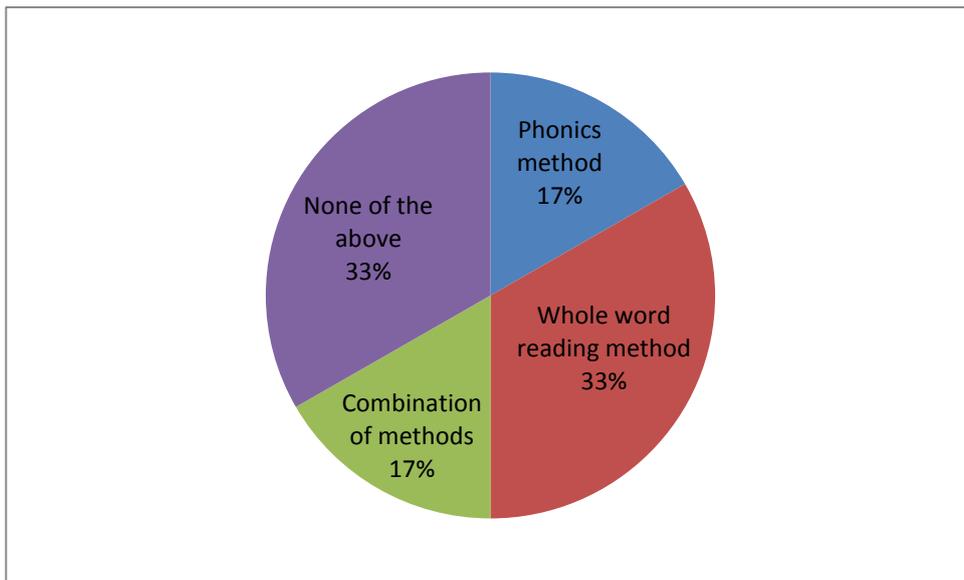
Figure 7: Teachers Qualification Specialization



Six teachers participated in the study. Of the six teachers 50% constituting three teachers had specialised qualification in teaching English, 16.7% constituting one

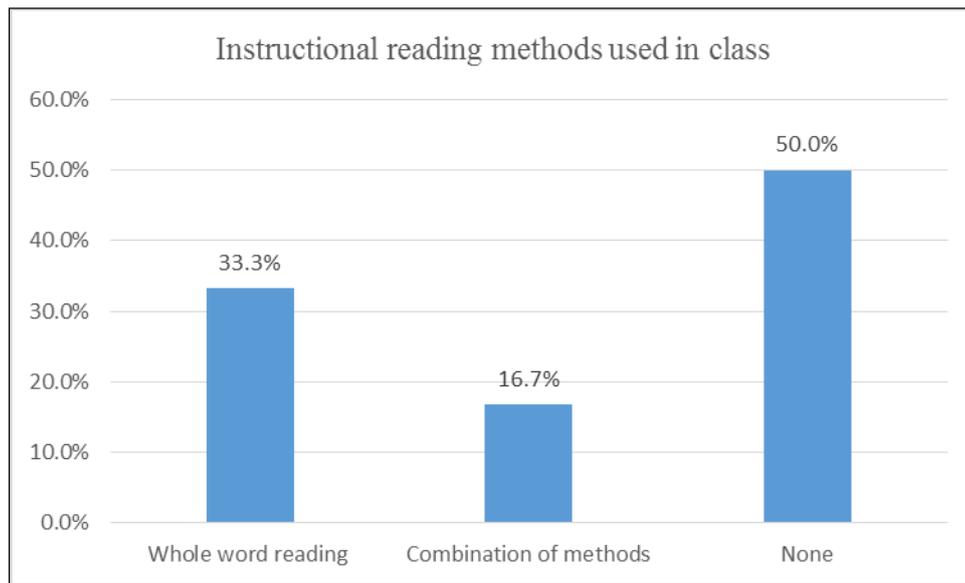
teacher had qualification that is specialisation in the teaching of Oshikwanyama and 33.3% constituting two teachers had neither specialisation qualification in the teaching of English nor Oshikwanyama as they only had grade 12 school certificate, as their highest level of education.

Figure 8: Teachers' familiarity with teaching methods



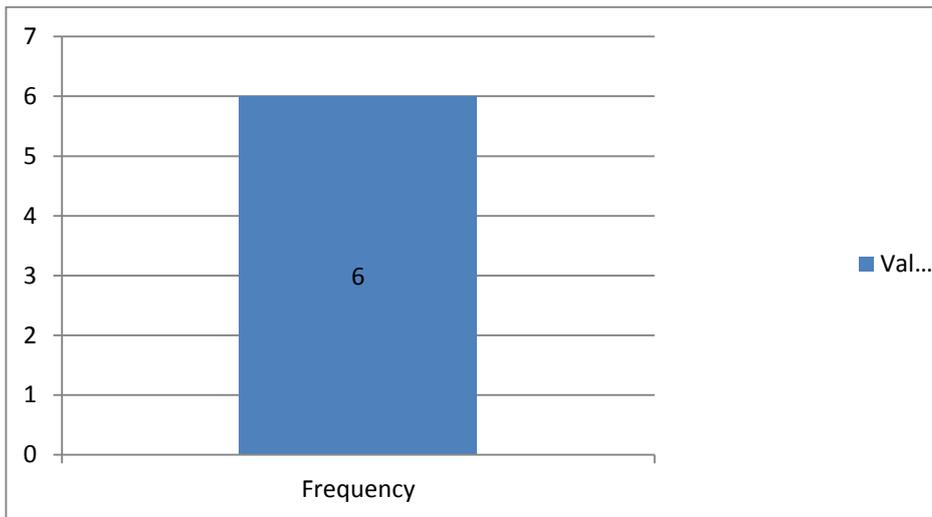
The results showed that out of the six teachers who participated in this study, only 17% were familiar with the phonics method of teaching reading. Furthermore, 33% of the teachers were familiar with the whole word method of teaching reading. Similarly, 33% of the teachers were neither familiar with the phonics nor the whole word reading method and only 17% of the teacher was familiar with both the phonics and whole word method.

Figure 9: Instructional reading methods used in class



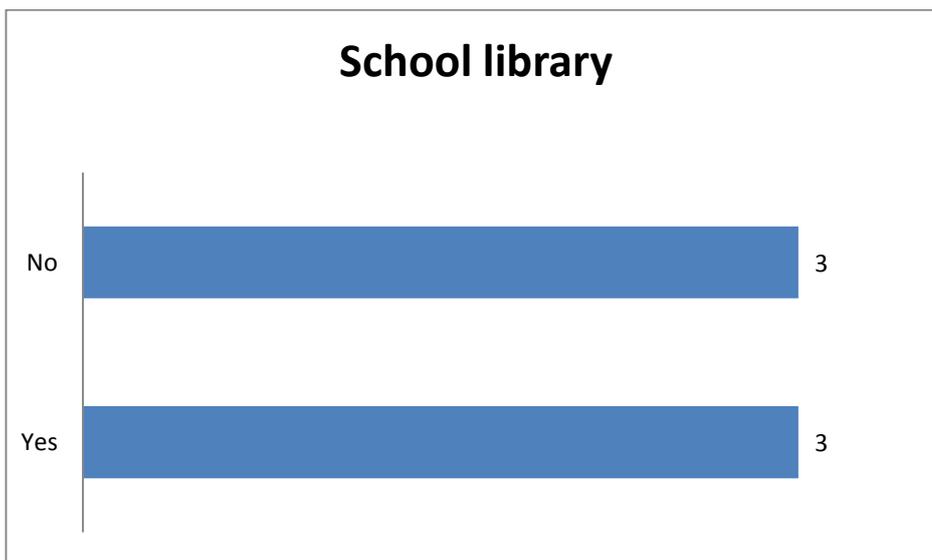
After indicating which methods teachers were familiar with, they indicated the methods they used when teaching reading. Of the six teachers, two teachers constituting (33.3%) of the respondents indicated that they used the whole word reading method when teaching reading, while only one teacher representing (16.7%) of the respondents indicated that he combines the phonics and the whole word method to teach reading. Three teachers represented by (50%) of the respondents indicated that they do not use any of the teaching methods when teaching reading. It seems that not all teachers apply all the techniques, methods and approaches in their reading lesson delivery to establish challenges of reading which learners face, as it was revealed from the participants in the Eenhana circuit.

Figure 10: Reasons for methods use



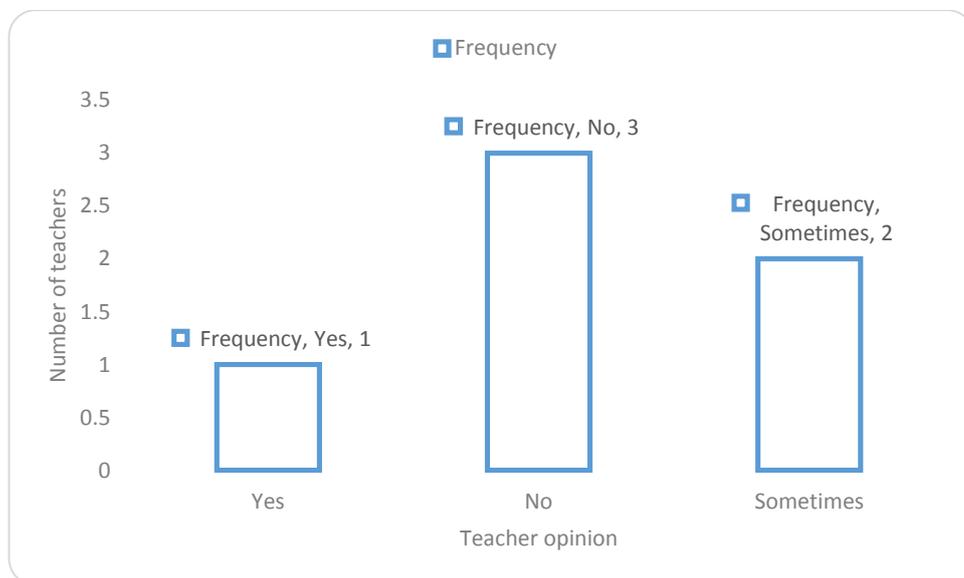
The study also attempted to find out the various reasons on teachers' preference of a particular teaching method they used in reading English. Six teachers participated in the study. As far as the reasons on using the reading instructional methods is concerned, all six teachers justified that they used their own opinions to apply reading instructional method in their teaching. All six teachers responded that they used the method which they think could best suit their learners.

Figure 11: School library



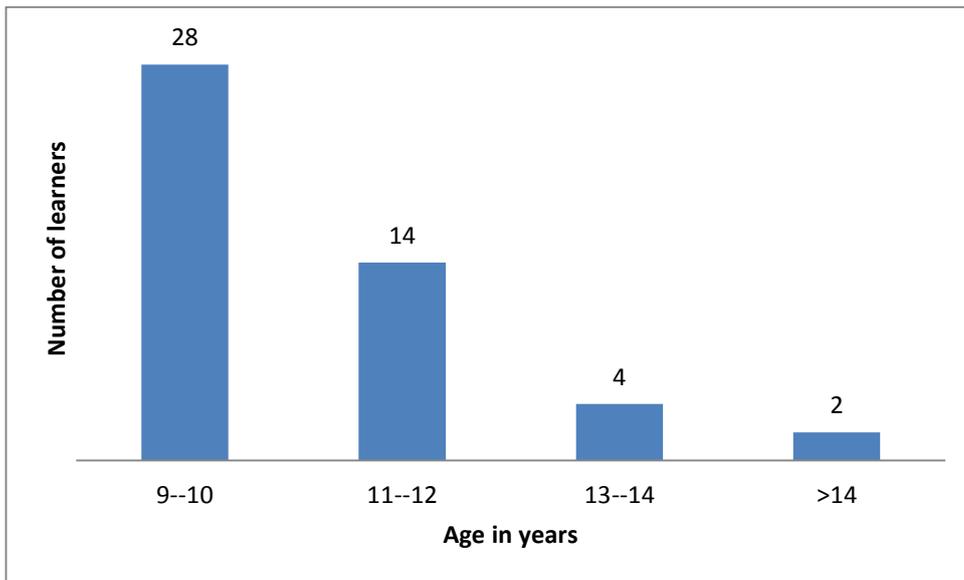
Six teachers participated in the study. All six teachers gave their confirmation of whether or not they had a class library or a school library. Of the six teachers, three teachers representing (50%) of the respondents indicated that they have school libraries, while the other three teachers representing the other (50%) indicated that they do not have school libraries. This means that some schools in Eenhana Circuit in Ohangwena Region, there are libraries while at others there is none.

Figure 12: Learners school library utilization



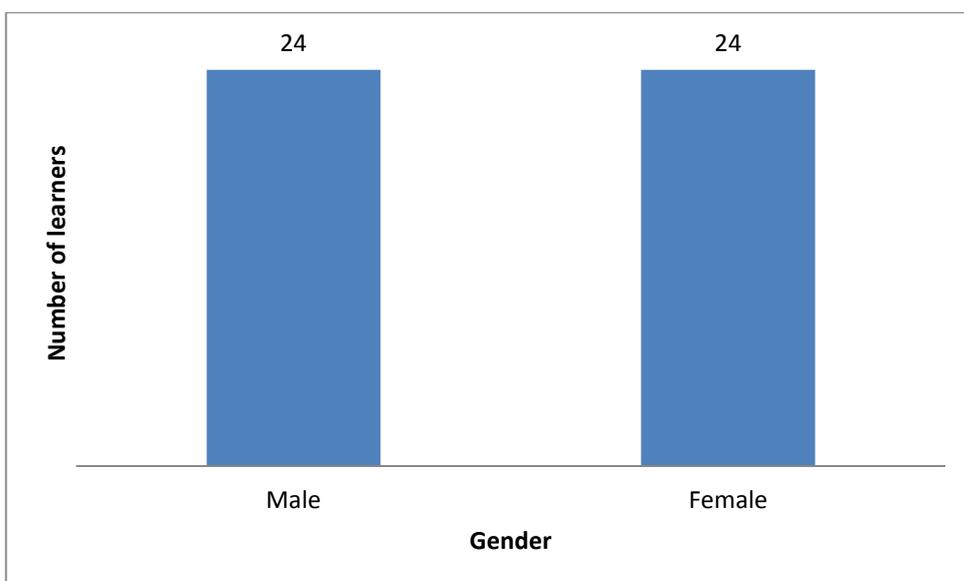
The study also attempted to find out if learners had access to the library and if there was a library at their schools. With regard to borrowing of books from the school library, 17% had responded that learners take books, 33% had responded that learners take books sometimes, while 50% had responded that learners do not take books from the library to go and read at home.

Figure 13: Learners' age



Forty eight learners participated in the study. They varied in age between 9 and 17 years of age. There were equal numbers of male and female participants for a total of forty eight learners. Twenty eight learners constituting of the respondents were aged between 9 -10 years, followed by fourteen learners aged between 11 – 12 years, then four learners aged 13 – 14 years and finally, two aged 14 and above.

Figure 14: Learners' gender



The study established the gender distribution of the participating learners. There were 24 respondents representing the male respondents and the other 24 respondents representing the female respondents.

4.3 Presentation of Quantitative Findings

4.3.1 Learners' performance on the individually administered tests

The purpose of the non-word reading test was to assess the learners' ability to decode the unknown words they have never seen before. It consisted of 10 words. Tests of phonological awareness were also administered to determine the learners' phonological awareness. This would help them to understand whether or not the learners possessed the necessary prerequisite skills for learning to read in English as a second language. The phonological awareness measure consisted of 10 items of the English Beginning phoneme (EBEPHON), 10 items on the English Ending phoneme measure (EEPHON), both the English digit span forward measure (EDSFOR), and the English digit reverse measure (EDSREV) which comprised of 12 items each. The English rapid naming-line drawing (ERNLD) and the English rapid naming-colour measures (ERNCOL) both consisted of 40 items; the Stroop Interference task also consisted of 40 items. The purpose of the rapid automatized naming tasks has been used to assess an individual's ability to rapidly or automatically access a known phonological form from a word lexicon. The English Sound Discrimination measure (ESODIS) comprised of 20 words and the purpose was to assess if learners could discriminate words with the same or different sounds. The results of the phonological awareness tests are shown in Table 2 below.

The results obtained by learners from these tests addressed one of the researcher's objectives which was to assess the Grade 4 learners' abilities in phonological awareness and knowledge of the alphabet. All the variables in the table below are the dependent variables that assessed whether the learners possessed the necessary prerequisite skills for learning to read. The researcher observed that the majority of the sample learners assessed in the Eenhana Circuit showed evidence of possessing the necessary prerequisite skills for learning to read, see Table 2 below summarizing the results of various variables that were used to measure phonological awareness.

Table 2: Learners' performance on single word reading, pseudo word reading, and phonological awareness measures

Descriptive Statistics

Individual Administered tests	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
EWR	48	0	70	41.73	18.252
ENWR	48	0	10	6.13	3.078
EBEGPHON	48	0	10	5.02	2.877
EEPHON	48	0	10	4.85	2.790
EDSFOR	48	1	12	7.17	2.066
EDSREV	48	0	12	2.90	1.916
ERNLD	48	0	40	37.10	8.314
ERNCOL	48	0	40	35.81	9.250
ESINTERFERENCE	48	2	40	37.92	6.341
ESODIS	48	0	20	11.17	6.241

Of the 10 administered tests (see table 2 above) EWR had a mean score of 41.73 with a standard deviation of 18.52. This implies that even though some learners were able to read well, still there were those who struggled to read English. The mean score of English non-word reading (ENWR) was 6.13 out of the overall score of 10, with a standard deviation of 3.078.

The total score for the English beginning phoneme (EBPHON) test and English beginning ending phoneme (EEPHON) was 10, with a mean score of 5.02 and standard deviation of 2.877; so the results denote that the majority of learners did averagely in beginning and ending phoneme tasks, even those who knew how to read. EEPHON had a total score of 10, and a mean score of 4.85 and a standard deviation of 2.790. The results imply that the majority of learners did averagely in beginning and ending phoneme tasks, even those who knew how to read. EDSFOR had a total score of 12, a mean score of 7.17 and a standard deviation of 2.066. EDSREV had a total score of 11, mean score of 2.90 and standard deviation of 1.916. These results imply that learners did better in the digit span forward than in the digit span reverse. ERNLD had a total score of 40, a mean score of 37.10 and standard deviation of 8.314. ERNCOL had a total score of 40, mean score of 35.81 and a standard deviation of 9.250. Most learners were able to name pictures and colours rapidly and correctly even if they did not know how to read in English. This implies that learners possessed the skills to learn to read but they needed to be assisted. The English stroop interference test had a total score of 40, a mean score of 37.92, with a standard deviation of 6.341. This implies that there were some learners who struggled to name the colours in which the words were written and those who named these colours without any interference by these colour words. This suggests that those children who were able to name the colours in

which the words were written without any interference by the colour words may have been poor readers (who, in all probability, may also have struggled with decoding the pseudo-words). The observed high mean score of 37.92 on stroop interference may explain the low mean score on single word reading (41.73). The last item in the table was ESODIS with a total score of 20, a mean score of English sound of 11.17, with the standard deviation of 6.241.

On the establishment of skill variability in various phonological skills, the English word reading and stroop interference tests had the highest and the second highest standard deviations respectively. The high standard deviations showed high variability of reading abilities in the two areas. In other reading areas, the standard deviation ranged from 1.9 to 3, thus depicting a low variability among the performance of the learners.

Table 3: Single word reading test

Single word reading test qualitative	70 words	N	S	O	A	N/O	T/Number of
Substitutes a visually similar letter when identifying letter	70	2 (25%)	19	12	5 (10.4%)	0	100%
Provides non-words responses for rhyming words	70	12	19	13 (27.1%)	4 (8.3%)	0	100%
Laboriously “sounds out” words	70	14	17	12	5 (10.4%)	0	100%
Self- correct errors				11	2 (4.2%)	12	
Loses his/her place when reading	70	19	11	13 (27.1%)	5 (10.4%)	0	100%
Adds, omit, or transposes syllables when reading words	70	2 (4.2%)	20 (41.7%)	22 (45.8%)	4 (8.3%)	0 (0%)	100%

KEY:

N: Never S: Seldom O: Often A: Always N/O: Not Observed

4.3.2 Observing of single word reading test

Qualitative observations of the participants’ reading were also carried out during the administration of the single word reading test. The purpose was to determine the nature of the errors the participants made while reading single words. According to the

results, often the participants would add, omit, or transpose syllables and/or letters in words when reading the single words; for example it was noted that learners when reading the word 'island', some would pronounce it as '*ishiland*', 'slide' and '*syland*', and the word '*heavy*' was read as '*hivi*' or '*hiven*'. This type of reading error reduces the accuracy of reading and thereby minimizes reading comprehension. English and Oshikwanyama languages differed in terms of the transparency of their written form, with Oshikwanyama having almost perfect correspondence between a grapheme and the phoneme it represents. An Oshikwanyama speaking person with a heavy mother tongue influence, reading and/or speaking English may pronounce words such as 'sorry' as '*sholly*' and 'socket' as '*shocket*'. This may be related to difficulties in perceiving those phonemes like /s/ without /h/ and /l/ instead of /r/. Sometimes, the participants would also substitute visually similar letters in words when reading the single words, for instance, by reading the words like; 'driver' as '*brive*', and 'duck' as '*buck*'. Invariably, the substitution of one letter with another results in the words being misread and the reading comprehension being compromised. Other qualitative errors that participants committed included struggling to decode the words, and therefore, reading them incorrectly; for example by reading words like; '*angel*' as '*agol*' or '*engel*' being read as '*oh*'. These errors point to the nature of the reading difficulties learners in this cohort presented.

The study also found the Pearson correlation relationship between English single word reading and English non-word reading and other phonological processing tasks. This is presented in the following table:

Table 4: Correlations of EWR test and ENWR test with phonological tests

Independent variables	English Word Reading	English Non-Word reading
English Non-Word Reading	0.871	1.00
English Beginning Phoneme	0.662**	0.336**
English Ending Phoneme	0.607**	0.540**
English Digit Span Forward	0.351*	0.386**
English Digit Span Reverse	0.386**	0.370**
English Rapid Naming Line Drawing	0.190*	0.167
English Rapid Naming Colour	0.429**	0.429**
English Stroop Word Interference	0.757**	0.757**
English Sound Discrimination	-0.125	-0.080

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.3.3 The relationship between EWR and ENWR tests with phonological awareness

The Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted for the various measures to determine the relationship between the phonological measures and single word reading and pseudoword reading (decoding). There was a very high correlation between English single word reading and non-word (pseudoword) reading as well as between English word reading and English stroop word interference. The relationship between

English word reading and non-word reading was statistically significant ($p < 0,05$), with a coefficient of correlation of 0,871 and 0,757 respectively. Therefore, there was an 87,1% relationship between English single word reading and non-word reading, and 75,7% between English single word reading and stroop interference. This implies that the child who was able to read an English single word correctly was also able to read an English non-word and English stroop interference, whereas, a child who cannot read English single words will experience a problem of reading English non-words as well as English stroop interference. There was also a high correlation between English single word reading and rapid naming of colour followed by a low correlation between English single word reading and rapid naming of colour line drawings. The relationship between English single word reading and rapid naming line, as well as between English single word reading and rapid naming colour was statistically significant, ($p < 0,05$), with a coefficient of correlation of 0,427 and 0,190 respectively. Therefore, there was a 42.2% and 19.0% relationship between English single word reading and rapid naming line and rapid naming colour. This implies that there was a rather low association between English single word reading and rapid naming line drawings. However, the correlation was strong enough to suggest that the rapidity with which the learners could name the line drawings and the colours positively influenced their ability to read. Those who could name these items quickly were better at reading single words. With regards to the relationship between English single word and digit span forward, as well as between English single word and digit span reverse, the relationship was statistically significant ($p < 0,05$) but with a low coefficient of correlation of 0,351 and 0,386 respectively. Therefore, there was 35.1% and 38.6% relationship between English single word reading and digit span forward and digit span reverse respectively. This denotes that the child's knowledge of digit span forward and

digit span reverse had a slight influence on the child's ability in English single word reading. The correlation between English word reading and beginning and ending phonemes is statistically significant ($p < 0,05$) with a high coefficient of 0,662 and 0,607 respectively. There was therefore, a 66.2% and 60.7% relationship between English single word reading and beginning and ending phonemes respectively, suggesting that the beginning and ending sounds (phonological skills) had a high influence on the learners' ability to read single words.

There was an inverse correlation between English single word reading and sound discrimination with a coefficient of correlation of -0,125, but this inverse correlation was not statistically significant ($p > 0,05$), meaning that when a learner increased his/her knowledge in English single word reading, the sound discrimination decreased.

There was also a very high correlation between non-word reading and stroop interference. The relationship between the two was statistically significant ($p < 0,05$) with a coefficient of correlation of 0.757. Therefore, there was a 75.7% relationship between non-word reading and stroop interference. This implies that the child who was able to read English non-word correctly, was also able to read English stroop interference, whereas a child who could not read English non-word would experience problems reading English stroop interference. Learners who were able to read non-words correctly struggled to go through this test as the first natural attempt was to read the words rather than name the colours in which the words were written. Therefore, they took a longer time to go through the test. There was also a high correlation between English single word reading and rapid naming of colour followed by a low correlation between English single word reading and rapid naming of colour line

drawings. The relationship between non-word reading and rapid naming colour, as well as between non-word reading and rapid naming line, was statistically significant ($p < 0,05$), with a coefficient of correlation of 0,167 and 0,429 respectively. Therefore, there was a 17,7% and 42,9% relationship between non-word reading and rapid naming line drawings and rapid naming colour. With regards to the relationship between non-word and digit span forward, as well as between non-word reading and digit span reverse, the relationship was statistically significant ($p < 0,05$), but with a low coefficient of correlation of 0,386 and 0,370 respectively. Therefore, there was a 38.6% and 37.0% relationship between non-word reading and digit span reverse respectively. This means that there was a very low association between non-word reading and digit span forward and digit span reverse.

The correlation between non-word reading and beginning and ending phoneme was statistically significant ($p < 0,05$), with a high coefficient of correlation of 0,336 in beginning phonemes but with an average coefficient of correlation of 0,540 in ending phoneme respectively. There was, therefore, a 33,6% and 54,0% relationship between non-word reading and ending phonemes respectively. This means that the knowledge of non-word reading did not affect the identification of beginning and ending phonemes. There was an inverse correlation between non-word reading and sound discrimination with a coefficient of -0,080, but this inverse correlation was not statistically significant ($p > 0,05$).

Table 5: Pearson Bivariate Product Moment Correlation between Lesson presentation and English word reading

	Variable J	
	English Word Reading (EWR)	
Variable I	Pearson's Correlation (r)	P-value
The materials used were up to level	0.444**	0.002
The reading, listening, writing and speaking skills were well integrated	0.350*	0.015
Learners were supported by correcting their spelling and pronunciation mistakes while reading	0.603**	0.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted and there was a weak positive correlation of 0.444 between materials used which were up to level and EWR was at a significant level of 0.002. A weak positive correlation of 0.350 existed between reading, listening, writing and speaking skills which were well integrated and EWR was at a significant level of 0.015. An averagely strong positive correlation existed between learners that were supported by correcting their spelling and pronunciation mistakes while reading and EWR was at a significant level of 0.000. The results imply that the higher the support, the better the ability to read and spell.

Table 6: Pearson Bivariate Product Moment Correlation between various measures of phonics, whole word/look and say methods used with English word reading

Pearson Bivariate Product Moment	Variable J	
Correlation between various measures of phonics, whole word/look and say methods used with English word reading		
	English Word Reading (EWR)	
Variable I	Pearson's Correlation (r)	P-value
Use limited set of words	0.465 ^{**}	0.001
Teaching reading by identifying common sounds in words	0.291 [*]	0.045
Teaching children letter-sounds correspondence	0.291 [*]	0.045
Teaching children how to blend sounds to form a new word	0.409 ^{**}	0.004
Gradually more letters are added	0.409 ^{**}	0.004
Learners are given consonant blend	0.325 [*]	0.024
Cluster blending was used	0.325 [*]	0.024

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson product-moment correlations were used for the various measures to determine the relationship between instructional methods used by the teacher and English word reading (EWR). The criterion for significance was set at a stringent level ($p < .01$). The above results (Table 6 above) show that there are statistical significant relationships between all the phonics instructional methods used by the teachers and the learners' ability of English words reading. A moderate relationship was noted between the use of a limited set of words and EWR ($r = .465$, $p = .01$), teaching children how to blend sounds to form words and EWR ($r = .409$, $p = .01$), and between gradually adding more letters and EWR ($r = .409$, $p = .01$). This implies that when teachers use a limited set of letters in teaching children how to read, to teach children how to blend sounds to form a new word, and then gradually add more letters, children's word reading will be moderately impacted with regards to their ability to read words.

A weak correlation was found between teaching children letter-sound correspondence and EWR ($r = .291$, $p = .05$), teaching reading by identifying common sounds in words and EWR ($r = .291$, $p = .05$), between teaching consonants blends and EWR ($r = .325$, $p = .05$) and between teaching cluster blending and EWR ($r = .325$, $p = .05$). This suggests that the teaching of these skills does not have a significant impact on learning to read. The results of the analysis are summarized in Table 6 above.

Table 7: Summary of correlations on teachers' teaching experiences with the EWR test

Teachers' teaching experiences	English Word reading
Teachers' experience in general teaching	-0.136
Teachers' experience in teaching English	0.841**
Teachers' academic qualification	0.415**
Teachers' specialisation	-0.354*

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.3.5 Correlations between teachers' teaching experiences and the EWR test

The study further assessed the relationship between the teachers' experience in general teaching, teachers' experience in teaching English language, teachers' academic qualifications, and teachers' specialisation in a particular subject and the learners' reading ability. The same probability level of $\alpha=0.01$ was adopted. Interestingly, there was a very weak negative correlation between teachers' experience in general teaching and EWR ($r = -0.136$), and this value is not statistically significant at either 1%, 5% and or 10% probability value. This suggests that the general teaching experience of the teacher has no bearing on English reading ability by the students being taught. However, of paramount importance to note is the strong positive correlation between teachers' experience in teaching English and EWR ($r = 0.841$, $p < 0.01$), implying that the experience of the teacher in teaching English largely influences the learner's ability to read English words. Teachers' academic qualifications and EWR show a moderate

positive correlation of $r = 0.415$, $p = 0.01$, and finally teachers' specialization and EWR had a low/weak negative correlation ($r = -0.354$, $p < 0.05$).

4.4 Presentation of Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data in this study was derived from three sources, namely; interview guide, observation checklist and from the open ended questionnaire (refer previous chapter). The presentation of the findings followed these categories of data.

4.4.1 Interview Findings

Table 8: Reading instructional methods used in their classes

Teachers were asked to indicate the reading instructional methods they use to teach reading English in their classes. All participants indicated the reading instructional methods they use as follows:	Reading instructional methods used
Teacher 1	Whole word method
Teacher 2	Whole word method, Phonics method and Story method
Teacher 3	Whole word method and Phonics method
Teacher 4	Combination of all reading instructional methods

Teacher 5	Whole word method
Teacher 6	Phonics method and Whole word method

The table indicates that teachers do not use similar reading instructional methods in their classes. They use varieties of different methods such as: Phonics methods, Whole word method and Story method. Whole word and phonics methods are the most popular methods used by the majority of the teachers interviewed.

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Teachers were also asked to describe how they teach using the method(s) they referred to in question 1 above. Respondents had the following to say:

Table 9: Reading instructional methods teachers use and how they use them

Respondents	What method is used	How the method is used
T1	Whole word method	Ask learners to read from textbook, Write words on a flipchart ask, individual learners to read them.
T2	Whole word method Phonic method	Pattern of word seen as a whole.

		Teach letter sound and word as a combination and link to the letter sound.
T3	Whole word reading method	Ask learners to read a certain text and assist them with difficult words.
T4	Combination of all reading instructional methods (Whole method and phonics)	Give learners stories printed on papers and ask learners to read them aloud and correct wrong pronunciation.
T5	Whole word method	Write words on the chalkboard and let individual learners to read them aloud.
T6	Phonics method	Teach learners to read by saying the sound of each letter.

Data in the table above reveals that the whole word method is used by half of the teachers interviewed (three out of six teachers) except that all the teachers use the method differently. For example, T1 raises a flipchart with a particular word on it and then asks individual learners to read the word that was displayed on the flipchart; T2 asked learners to read patterns of words seen as a whole by teaching them first the letter sound and then the whole word as a combination by linking letters to their sounds. T3 asked learners to read a certain text from their reader books and assists them where they have difficulties in pronouncing words.

4.4.2 Causes of challenges of reading to learners

In order to establish the likely causes of challenges that prevent learners to read English as a second language in Grade 4, teachers were asked to comment on the cause of the learners' challenges on reading. All six teachers revealed the challenges of reading English as a second language amongst their learners.

Table 10: Learners' challenges that hamper reading performance

Respondents	Causes of challenges in reading
T1	Parents do not assist children on how to read.
T2	Learners do not differentiate between letter sounds and letter names.
T3	Learners' lack of appreciation of reading in their daily life and lack of self-confidence in most of the sounds when added to any letter.
T4	Learners do not master English words from the previous grades (Grade 1 -3).
T5	Learners' environment plays a role in reading proficiency.
T6	Previous teachers did not give learners the proper basics of reading which now has an influence on English reading proficiency.

From the responses given in Table 10 above, it can be seen that learners performed poorly in reading English second language due to several reading problems. The challenges in learning to read highlighted by teachers include lack of parental assistance, the environment where learners come from and the inability of learners to master English words from Grades 1 - 3.

However, the respondents were not asked to highlight or classify which problems are associated or with which gender of learners.

4.4.3 Nature of reading problems identified

Teachers were asked to indicate the nature of the reading problems faced by learners when learning to read. Teachers commented as follows:-

Table 11: Nature of reading problems identified

Teachers	Responses
T1	Mother tongue influence
T2	Cognitive problems
T3	Learners do not differentiate the vowel sounds in English and their mother tongue
T4	Cognitive influence
T5	Learners do not recognise the letters
T6	Mother tongue influence

It is evident from the overall responses that learners are confronted with various or different nature of reading problem categories which hinder their reading abilities such as mother tongue influence. The cognitive problem was also identified by two of the teachers. One of the teachers identified that learners do not differentiate the vowel sounds in English and in their Mother tongues. Moreover, some learners do not even recognise the letters.

4.4.4 Availability of resources to aid learning to read in English

The objective of this question was to establish if there are resources at school level to help learners with reading literacy. Since teachers came from different schools, the data presented here reflects situations at the respective schools. Six teachers indicated the following:

1. *'One teacher said, Yes. We have newspapers and textbooks.'*
2. *'A view from one teacher was, No, we don't have any additional resources but we have some textbooks.'*
3. *'Another teacher said, Yes. We have story books.'*
4. *'In one teacher's words, No, we only have a few textbooks.'*
5. *'One teacher made this clear, saying, No, there is no additional resource apart from the few textbooks we use.'*
6. *'One teacher commented, Yes. We have story books.'*

Two of the teachers have story books, one teacher used newspapers, whereas four of the teachers use textbooks. Three teachers revealed that they do not have any additional resources to aid learning at their schools except textbooks.

4.4.5 Teachers' views on teaching reading in the English language

Teachers who participated were asked to reflect on their own teaching in reading English as a second language and give their views on teaching reading in English as a second language. Teachers provided the following views:

Table 12: Teachers’ views on the challenges in teaching reading in English language

T1	One of the causes of difficulties in reading in English is the fact that from Grade 1-3 other subjects are taught in the mother tongue except English itself. The transition starts from grade 4 upwards where English becomes the medium of instruction across all subjects.
T2	Workshops on phonetics should be given to teachers each year. Workshop to parents to help their children. Integration of reading in English in all subjects.
T3	Upgrade the teachers’ teaching skills and methods. Set a target on their reading skills.
T4	Increase reading materials to be available to all learners with different reading levels.
T5	Upgrading of the teaching of reading in the English language at lower grades.
T6	Learners must be taught how to read from grade 1 before they enter grade 4.

Table 12 above reflects teachers’ views on their difficulties in the teaching of reading in the English language. The table indicates the different views of teachers about the teaching of reading in English as a second language. Interestingly, it can be inferred that the current status quo in the learning of reading in English is not optimum and requires interventions. However, the suggested solutions differ from one teacher to the other. Some suggested a curriculum related change, others suggested that on the job training of the teachers will assist. For example T1 revealed that the problem of reading

in English is likely to be caused by the teaching of English only as a subject from Grade 1-3. Moreover, T2 indicated that workshops on phonetics should be given to teachers each year, as well as workshops to parents to be able to help their children with reading and the integration of reading English in all subjects should be emphasised. Similarly, T3 pointed out that English in all subjects should be upgraded, especially at Lower grades (1-3) and there is a need to set targets on reading; whereas T5 believed in the upgrading of the teaching of reading the English language at the lower grades. T6 echoed the same sentiment that learners must be taught how to read from Grade 1 before they enter Grade 4.

4.5 Classroom Observation Results

Classroom observations were conducted by the researcher through observation checklists to establish variants of phonics and whole word/look and say methods used during lesson presentation. The researcher observed that all the six teachers who participated in this study and they were coded as follows: Teacher 1 (T1), Teacher 2 (T2), Teacher 3 (T3), Teacher 4 (T4), Teacher 5 (T5) and Teacher 6 (T6). The researcher observed the following variants: how teachers uses limited set of letters when teaching reading English; how they teaching children how to blend sounds to form a new word; how learners are given consonant blends; and how flashcards with individual words were used.

Table 13: Observation on the variants of phonics and whole word/look and say methods during lesson presentation

Variant	Teachers and Schools					
	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
Teacher uses limited set of letters when teaching reading	X	√	X	X	√	√
Teaching children how to blend sounds to form a new word	X	X	√	X	√	X
Learners are given consonant blends	X	√	X	X	X	X
Flashcards with individual words were used	X	X	X	X	√	X

KEY SYMBOLS: X = Variant NOT used

√ = Variant used

Phonics is a method whereby “the speech is broken into individual sounds and represented letters (Alderson, 2000, p.132). The phonic method teaches the correspondence between letters and the sounds they represent. Table 12 above shows that the use of a limited set of letters as a variant form of the phonic method used to teach reading in English is commonly used by 3 out of 6 teachers (T2, T5 and T6). Moreover, teaching children how to blend sounds to form new word was used mainly by T3 and T5, whereas the use of flashcards with individuals and giving consonant blends were used by T2 and T5. Furthermore, T5 used almost all the required variants of methods of reading, except of giving learners consonant blends which is rarely used by many teachers. It was only T2 who used the consonant blend amongst other teachers. Surprisingly, T4 did not adhere to any variant of the reading methods at all (see Table 12).

In general, the researcher observed that there was no demonstration by teachers on how to break words into sounds. Furthermore, it was observed that the majority of learners were struggling to read as they were assisted to read word by word, whereas some of them did not understand the text that was read at all. The observer noted that teachers did not introduce the lesson to link learners' prior knowledge, instead learners were instructed to take the book and read only from a certain page. Equally, the teachers' attention was mainly focusing on correcting the reading errors committed by learners and not writing those difficult words on the chalkboard or on the posters for learners to enable them to practice reading whenever they come across them through their own reading. Some of the learners had problems with pronunciation which might be caused by their mother-tongue interference that is Oshikwanyama. Therefore, they have difficulties to pronounce the word 'three' as in most cases you could hear the word 'free'; instead of using 'th' they use /f/. Some Grade 4 learners were struggling to read long words from their reader books such as; '*cleverest, anteater, creatures, fingerprints*' and many other long words.

On the other hand, a few learners were able to search for definitions of words from dictionaries and they were also able to identify words with common sounds from the text and write them down such as; '*greedy, feet and tree*'. A few learners were able to assist others when they pronounced words wrongly.

In addition, most of the teachers pronounced words correctly during the lesson presentation, they integrated all the reading skills well, and teachers assisted learners

with the correct pronunciation, whereas a few teachers introduced their lessons with interesting stories with the picture printed on the flipcharts.

Findings that emerged from observation and interview:

- a) The whole word method is the most popular method used by five out of six teachers, the phonics method is a less popular method that is used by two out of six teachers, whereas the combination of reading instructional methods (whole word and phonics methods) is the least popular method used by only 1 out of six teachers.
- b) Different reading instructional methods were used differently by teachers.
- c) Learners performed poorly in the reading in English second language due to the inability of pronouncing most of the sounds, lack of parental assistance, and the environment where learners come from.
- d) Various challenges which hinder the learners' abilities to read are mother tongue influence, cognitive problems and lack of ability to differentiate the vowel sounds in English and in their mother tongues as well as the lack of the recognition of letters.
- e) Most schools lack teaching resources to aid learning. Only textbooks are mostly used as indicated by four out of six teachers. There are no other additional resources of learning except one school which is using newspapers.

4.6 Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the primary data of the study about the “Challenges fourth grade learners encounter in reading English second language in six

primary schools in Ohangwena Region in Namibia”. The primary data analysed and presented in this chapter was obtained through teachers’ questionnaire, classroom observations, teachers’ interview schedule and learners’ reading ability in single word reading, pseudo word reading and phonological processing skills. The findings showed that learners have challenges in English reading proficiency resulting from their inability to recognise letters, influence of the mother tongue, lack of basic English language skills and cognitive problems. The pronunciation of words was the most prominent challenge for learners. Limited reading instructional methods by teachers also contribute to the challenges in learning how to read in English. Finally, findings have shown that there is a positive correlation between learning to read in the English language and reading instructional methods and English reading proficiency.

The next chapter presents the discussions of findings, conclusions of the study and recommendations for future action to mitigate challenges faced by learners in learning how to read in the English language.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter focuses on steps taken in carrying out this research project. The purpose of the study was to analyse “challenges fourth grade learners encounter in reading English second language in six primary schools in Ohangwena region”. This chapter discusses the findings from both qualitative and quantitative research to each question. The chapter also summarises the study’s results and draws recommendations based on overall findings. The last part of the chapter presents the conclusion of the study.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The study focused on challenges encountered by primary school learners when reading English second language by Grade Four learners. The study specifically focused on identifying the factors which contribute to reading difficulties that are experienced by the Grade 4 learners in English and on establishing the nature of the learners’ reading difficulties with regards to decoding, pronunciation and fluency. Furthermore, the study also set out to establish the literacy instruction methods used in teaching English reading and the support provided by teachers to help learners improve their reading.

Regarding the nature of learners' reading difficulties, particularly focusing on decoding, pronunciation and fluency, the qualitative observation of reading found that learners experienced difficulties in word attack. This was shown by learners taking a long time to decode and read words, stammering and omitting some sounds in certain words. The challenge resulted in the majority of the learners failing to pronounce words automatically, reading syllable by syllable and correcting themselves when they thought they had made an error in pronunciation. Similarly, in the quantitative findings, the majority of the learners showed weaknesses in the identification of the beginning and ending phonemes of words. This was shown by the low statistical 'means' results found amongst learners in identifying both the beginning and ending phonemes. The standard deviations in both the beginning and ending phonemes were also quite small, which implies that there was not much variation in the scores of the children. This infers that the scores were below the mean (see table 2).

According to the parallel distributed processing model, the phonological skills, of which phonemic awareness is a key component, are based on a connectionist or neural network theory of reading. The model states that the "Two central features of the Parallel Distributed Processing Model are (1) that all cognitive information is stored as a series of connections between units, and (2) that these connections between units become stronger and faster with repeated pairings" (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p.164). Tracey and Morrow (2006) further explain about the conceptualisation of storing information in the brain as a series of connections of differing strength known as Connectionism. The concept of Connectionism applies to the strength of the associations of lines, curves, angles, and spaces within letter patterns.

Consequently, during the reading process, the orthographic processor uses the strength of the connection between letters to activate letters that are likely to follow the initially identified letter and to suppress letters that are unlikely to follow the initially identified letter (Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

Therefore, the study found that the poor connections between letters and sounds that are formed when a letter frequently occurs together in words might be the contributory factors to poor reading performance in English.

5.2.1 Challenges affecting reading difficulties among Grade 4 learners in the Eenhana circuit

The findings on the classroom observation and learners' proficiency in reading in English indicated that there is a challenge in both teaching and reading. Teachers had similarities and differences regarding the reading instructional methods they use to teach reading in Grade 4.

Despite teachers being aware of the reading instructional methods, many learners are still struggling to master the reading skills. Learners appear to have difficulties with pronunciation and if they find out that a certain word is difficult to pronounce, they either stop reading or continue murmuring a word without correctly reading it. Equally, teachers do not seem to give extra classes on reading to learners. Strucher (2002, p. 37) concurs that English does not necessarily have the same level of correspondence between the sound and the written form that occurs in some other alphabetic languages. In many instances, many learners are not familiar with the pronunciations of some

words. This creates challenges in the use of phonics and it is an issue that needs to be addressed in teacher education. Adams (2005), Eldridge, Quinn and Butterfield (2004), and Stahl (2006) concur that there is value in teaching children sounds and symbols as part of beginning reading instructions, but as time goes on and children become competent decoders, the emphasis needs to shift to fluency.

5.2.2 The availability of resources to help the struggling learners with reading literacy

Learners need to be exposed to a reading culture. In other words, lack of libraries deprived learners' exposure to reading. It is obvious that one of the core functions of the library is to support the development of literacy competencies. This researcher agrees with Lerner (2000), as well as Dickson and Neuman (2006) who emphasizes that children who are exposed to books in their early years are likely to read more easily than those who start reading at a later stage.

It appears that many of the parents in remote areas are not financially independent, thus, they cannot afford to buy their children story books to read. Similarly, the SACMEQ report (2004) agrees that parents are economically disadvantaged and they often cannot afford to buy reading books for their children. Basically, Namibia has few school libraries countrywide, an element that contributes to the slow development of the reading culture.

5.2.3 Learners' individually administered tests

The study reflected poor reading abilities in English by the learners as depicted by the results emanating from the different tests given to the learners to assess their phonological processing skills and reading abilities in English. From the English word reading test, the findings of this study indicate that the EWR test scored the highest mean score of 41.73 with the standard deviation of 18.252, while the EDSREV test had the least mean score of 2.90 with a standard deviation of 1.916 (see Table 2). The highest mean score of 41.73 is not good enough in a situation where a maximum mean score of 70 should be achieved. There is therefore a great need for teachers to ensure that they develop the learners' reading abilities in English. The findings are in agreement with Savage et al. (2008) who concur that phonological decoding skills remain a major obstacle for reading and spelling in the English language. Equally, these findings are in line with Droop and Verhoeven (2003) who agree that the acquisition of knowledge of the alphabet, phonemic awareness and the ability of reading skills often go with the challenges of reading abilities. Moreover, the study agrees with Geudens (2003) who argues that the purpose of learning to read an alphabetic script is for the learner to find a way to translate or decode the letter into the sounds, a skill that is referred to as alphabetic coding.

5.2.4 Learners' nature of reading errors

On the single word reading test, learners encountered a number of problems, for example 25% of the learners often substituted visually similar letters, 15,7% could do self-corrections, whereas 39.6% were proficient in their reading. In other words they

were actually reading well without losing their reading pace. In addition, there were 45.8% of learners who often add, omit or transpose syllables when reading (Refer to Table 3, p. 59).

It is likely that the orthography of a particular language can have an impact on phonological development. Oshikwanyama and English are good examples; Oshikwanyama has a negative influence on the pronunciation of English words, and this has a contribution towards poor reading skills by learners in English. Oshikwanyama mother tongue for example, has a negative influence on learning how to read in English. The findings of these results support Nel and Swanepoel (2010) as well as Crystal (1996) who argue that second language transfer happens particularly on a phonological level because the sound, stress and intonation pattern of the first language are carried over to the second language. It is clear that learners encounter several reading challenges in reading in English as a second language as was indicated by the Ministry of Education (2012) on the National Standardized Achievement Test administered in Ohangwena region. This was also evident from this study that most of the learners in Eenhana circuit cannot read well in the English language.

5.2.5 Correlations of EWR test and ENWR test with the phonological test

The results revealed that the strongest significant correlation was between the EWR and ENWR ($r=.871$, $p<.01$), whereas the lowest but significant correlation was between the ENWR test and EBEGPHON ($r=.336$, $p<.01$) (see Table 4). A strong correlation between the EWR and ENWR suggests that the ability to read English words improves as the ability to decode words improves. This suggests that English

word reading and non-word reading are dependent on each other. Therefore, it would be helpful if teachers taught learners how to decode words through the use of phonics. Teachers should blend the two when teaching reading English to achieve positive results.

Keeves and Darmawana (2007) argue that from Grade 4 onwards, all learning materials are written in English which is the second language to the learners. It seems that to the First Language speakers, it is not be easy to read fluently in the second language if they are not exposed to read at the early stage. Savage, Pillay and Melidona (2008) support the fact that English is known to be a forward irregular and backward irregular for both reading and spelling. This study supports Baker (2006) who argues that if the transition from the Home Language to the Second Language is not well monitored it may result in many learners being in a classroom in which the cognitively demanding language is beyond their grasp. It is the researcher's view that the transfer of learners from one grade to another without mastering reading skills also has a huge impact on the leaners' reading skills. Nel and Swanepoel (2010), also argue that "the Second Language transfer happens particularly on phonological levels because the sound, stress and intonation patterns of the first language are carried over to the Second Language."

5.2.6 Correlations on reading instructional methods with EWR test

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the nature of the relationship between reading instruction methods used by the teacher and the ability of his/her students to read English words (EWR). The results of the study show that different

instructional methods impact differently on students' ability to read English words, as shown by the different magnitudes of correlation values between different methods against EWR. For example using a limited set of letters (ULSS) and EWR ($r=0.465$, $p<.01$.), implies that the more the teachers use the method (increase in frequency of use), increases the ability of the learners to read English words. The teaching cluster blended method (TCB) has the desired results as there is a strong positive correlation between TCB and EWR ($r=0.707$, $p<.01$). The correlation value suggests that as the intensity of using the method increases, so is the ability to read English words by the learners upon which the method is being used. Reutzel and Cooter (2010), Stanovich (1980) and Rumelhart (1977) suggest that phonics need to be taught separately, directly, and systematically to learners, and not in the context of reading literature. This is exceptionally the best method of instruction with regards to the ability by the students to read English words is teaching consonant blending (TCB). The correlation of TCB and EWR is ($r=1$, $p<.01$).

Lesson presentation as measured by variables under column variable (I) on table 5 were correlated with EWR to establish the strength of the relationship. Familiarity of the text used to the learners had no influence on the ability of the learners to read the English word ($r=0.054$, $p=0.716$), so was the case with the way the teacher introduces the reading lesson. However the support given by the teacher in correcting spelling and pronunciation mistakes had the highest positive correlation of 0.603 ($p=0.000$) with EWR. The higher the support, the better the ability to read. Similarly, as the material used compares well to the level of the learners so was their ability to read English words ($r=0.444$, $p=0.002$) and finally the proper integration of listening,

writing and speaking skills ensures a higher EWR ability. The integration implied to in this case refers to the intensity and/or frequency ($r=0.350$, $p=0.015$).

The Pearson product-moment correlations were used for the various measures to determine the relationship between instructional methods used by the teacher and English word reading (EWR). The criterion for significance was set at a stringent level ($p<.01$). The use of a limited set of letters versus EWR ($r=.465$, $p=0.001$) has the highest correlation being observed. The teaching of reading by identifying common sounds and when teachers teach children letter correspondence have a weak correlation with English word reading (EWR) (both have $r=0.291$, $p=0.045$). Similarly, when teachers teach children how to blend sounds to form a new word and also teaching learners by gradually having more letters added, all has the same correlation ($r=0.409$, $p=0.004$). The more the teacher teaches learners how to blend the sound with different letters, the better the learners will become fluent readers. On the contrary, the use of flashcards with individual words has no significant correlation with EWR ($r=0.123$, $p=0.404$) so is the teaching by gradually giving a set of words with EWR ($r=0.266$, $p=0.068$).

The results of the study show that different instructional methods impact differently the students' ability to read English words, implying that the more the teachers use the method (increase in frequency of use), this increases the ability of the learners to read English words. Such a method thus should be encouraged as it has a positive impact as the results of the study revealed. Reutzel and Cooter (2010), Stanovich (1980) and Rumelhart (1977) suggest that phonics need to be taught separately, directly, and systematically to learners, and not in the context of reading literature.

The best method of instruction with regards to the ability by the students to read English words is teaching consonant blending (TCB). Thus the more learners are subjected to the instructional method, the more they excel and vice versa (Keeves & Darmawana, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2005).

5.2.7 Correlations on teachers' teaching experience with EWR

Teachers' experience in teaching English word reading and the learners he/she is teaching's ability to read English words (EWR) scored the highest correlation value of $r=.841, p<.01$ compared to the correlation between teaching experience and EWR which scored $r= -.136, p<.01$ (see Table 6). The results indicate that the experience of teachers in teaching English is a necessary ingredient in helping learners with reading English words. However, when it comes to their general teaching experience, experience of which refers to the number of years in the teaching fraternity, such years do not really help in the ability of learners to read English words.

The results indicate that the experience of teachers in the teaching of English is a necessary ingredient in helping learners with reading English words. However, when it comes to their general teaching experience, experience of which refers to the number of years in the teaching fraternity, such years do not really help in the ability of learners to read English words. The results concur with the findings by Commeyras and Inyenga (2007), who argue that all language teachers, whether of English or African languages need education in general language teaching methodologies for teaching specific languages more effectively.

A close look into the sample reveals that only two teachers have more general teaching experience as they have taught for more than five years compared to the rest (four teachers) who have only taught for less than five years. Moreover, two of these teachers with less than five years are classified as unqualified teachers. This means that these teachers only have a Grade 12 certificate and thus they only teach according to how they were taught at Grade 12. Thus, this study found that some teachers in the Eenhana circuit were not trained on how to use reading instructional methods.

The findings on the teachers' interview and learners' proficiency in reading English indicated that there is a challenge in both teaching and reading. Teachers had similarities and differences regarding the reading instructional methods they use to teach reading in Grade 4 (see Table 7 and 8). However, classroom observations contradicted the teachers' responses on the reading instructional methods used in their classes. Some teachers indicated that they used similar methods but used different variants of phonics and whole word/look and say during their lesson presentation. The researcher found out that some teachers did not use any variant of teaching reading at all (see Table 12).

The findings of this study concur with Hartney (2011) and Junias (2009), who observe that teacher training institutions prepare student teachers in all the approaches and the methods and techniques outlined in this chapter, but once these student teachers graduate and are in the field they hardly follow them.

Equally, teachers do not seem to give extra classes on reading to learners. As argued by Strucher (2002, p. 37), English does not necessarily have the same level of

correspondence between sound and the written form that occurs in some other alphabetic languages. In addition, Wong (1998) states that teachers should first teach the awareness of the sound (phonic) system and then they should anchor the printed letter (grapheme) to the sound knowledge. In the ‘look and say’ method, learners are taught to recognise whole words or sentences, rather than individual sounds. Hence, learners look at a word which the teacher reads and in turn they repeat the word (Ministry of Education, 2005). So, teachers’ knowledge both in content and methodology is of great importance if the teaching of the two language media is to succeed. It is thus clear that reading instruction depends in part on the teacher’s knowledge and effective use of instructional methods. In many instances, many learners are not familiar with the pronunciation of some words. This is a challenge for many teachers too because English vowel sounds are difficult for speakers of African languages. This creates challenges in the use of phonics and it is an issue that needs to be addressed in teacher education.

The findings of this study concur with what a number of reading experts, linguistics and other researchers such as Adams (2005), Eldridge, Quinn and Butterfield (2004), and Stahl (2006), who state that there is value in teaching children sounds and symbols as part of beginning reading instruction, but as time goes on and children become competent decoders the emphasis needs to shift to fluency.

5.3 Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the challenges that fourth graders encounter in reading as a second language in six primary schools in Ohangwena region. Considering the

findings from the primary research and the literature reviewed in chapter 2, this section provides the conclusions of the study. The conclusions are provided in line with the research objectives.

Objective 1: To identify the challenges that hamper learners' English reading proficiency as a second language in Grade 4.

According to this objective and the findings of the study, it can be concluded that English reading proficiency is a challenge to learners who lack the knowledge of the alphabet. It can be further concluded that the challenges that hamper learners' English reading proficiency include limited reading instructional methods by teachers, learners' inability to recognise letters and the influence of the mother tongue.

Objective 2: To assess the Grade 4 learners' abilities in phonological awareness and knowledge of the alphabet.

According to this objective and the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Grade 4 learners have low abilities in phonological awareness and knowledge of the alphabet. This leads to poor English reading proficiency.

Objective 3: To explore the reading instructional methods teachers use when teaching reading English as a second language in Grade 4.

According to this objective and the findings of the study, it can be concluded that there are a variety of reading instructional methods teachers are taught at teacher training institutions in Namibia, but when they go into the teaching field after graduation, teachers only use some of the reading instructional methods when teaching how to read English. This has a negative impact on the learners' English reading proficiency as a second language in Grade 4.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made and they can be implemented in order to alleviate the challenges that fourth graders encounter when reading in English as a second language in Ohangwena Region:-

- Schools should convince parents through teacher-parents meetings to buy reading books for their children. This will minimise the problem of the lack of materials in the development of reading habits that must start at an early stage. Readathon programs and quiz competitions should be stressed in schools on an annual basis to expose learners' reading to a wide range of reading that helps to improve reading proficiency.
- Every classroom should have a reading corner that stimulates learners' interest in reading.
- Phonological awareness should be emphasised from early grades (1-3) in order for Grade 4 learners to be able to read fluently.
- Teachers should teach learners how to decode words through the use of phonics.
- The Ministry of Education should make sure that all teachers who teach at Junior Primary Phase (Grade 1-3) are trained on how to use reading instructional methods correctly through workshops.
- The Ministry of Education also needs to build school libraries and supply enough stimulants reading materials to schools. With more books available, reading skills and literacy among learners will improve at a faster pace.
- Finally, more and varied teaching approaches should be applied to teach reading instructional methods, such as the Whole word method, Phonics method and the combination of methods as for most of the lessons observed, teachers were

concentrating more on the Whole word reading method and questioning on the text read.

5.5 Further Research

Since this study only investigated the challenges that fourth graders encounter in reading English as a second language in Ohangwena Region, further studies can look at various other factors that may have some bearing on the teaching of English reading skills in the Junior Primary Phase (grade 1-3).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter requesting permission from the researcher

P. O. BOX 286
TSUMEB
18 March 2014

Enquiries: Mrs N. P. NEPANDO
Tel 060 806 8862
Cell: 0812592056
E-mail: ndahambelega@gmail.com

The permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education
Government Office park
Private Bag 13186
Windhoek

Dear sir/madam

Re: Permission to conduct Educational research study in the Eenhana Circuit

I, Ndahambelega Pefewa Nepando, a Master of Education degree (M.Ed) student (student number 8718512) at the University of Namibia, am requesting the Ministry's permission to conduct an educational research for my thesis in order to fulfill the M. Ed requirements.

My research topic is: "Challenges Fourth Graders Encounter in Reading English Second Language at Primary Schools in Eenhana Circuit". The study will be done through questionnaire (with teachers), interview (with the Grade 4 teachers), reading test (with the Grade 4 learners) and classroom observations. The primary aim is to find solution to the challenges experienced by the Grade 4 learners in reading English second language in the circuit. The findings might enable the region and the Ministry of Education to improve the reading skills of the Grade 4 learners in English second language in the circuit and beyond.

The study will target the six primary schools in the Eenhana circuit. I would like to assure your good office that the information collected will be held confidential and will be used for research purposes. Furthermore, I want also to assure you that no classes will be interrupted during data collection process.

I am supervised by Dr. K. Veii (main) and Ms L. Shaketange (co), University of Namibia.

Your assistance in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours faithfully

.....
Ndahambelega Pefewa Nepando

Appendix 2: Consent Letter from Ministry of Education



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Enquiries: Mr C. Muchila
E-mail: Cavin.Muchila@moe.gov.na
Tel: +264 61 2933297
Fax: +264 61 2933922

Private Bag 13186,
WINDHOEK
Namibia

File no: 11/1/1

Date: 31 March 2014

To: Mrs N. P. Nepando
P. O Box 286
Tsumeb, Namibia
Cell: 0812592056
E-mail: ndahambelela@gmail.com

Dear: Mrs Nepando

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY IN EENHANA CIRCUIT, OHANGWENA REGION

Your correspondence regarding the subject above, seeking permission to conduct a research study in the schools of Eenhana Circuit in Ohangwena Region has reference.

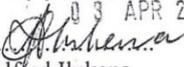
Kindly be informed that the Ministry does not have any objection to your request to conduct a research study at identified schools in the circuit and region concerned.

You are, however, kindly advised to contact the Regional Council Office, Directorate of Education, for authorisation to go into the schools and for proper information coordination.

Also take note that the research activities should not interfere with the normal school programmes. Participation by either teachers or learners should be on a voluntary basis. Should you involve minors in your research activities, consent for participation should first be obtained from the parents/guardians of the minor(s).

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

Sincerely yours


Mr. Alfred Ilukena
PERMANENT SECRETARY

cc: Director of Education: Ohangwena

All official correspondence must be addressed to the Permanent Secretary

Appendix 3: Permission letter to the Inspector of Education

Post Office Box 286
TSUMEB
13 May 2014

Enquiries: Ms N. P. Nepando
Onanona Combined School
Eenhana circuit
Cell: 0812592056

The Inspector of Education
Ohangwena Regional Council
Directorate of Education
Eenhana Circuit

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOLS

I am a part-time student with University of Namibia and my student number 8718512. I would be grateful if you will allow me to use your school as my research site for the research report which I am required to write.

The aim of my research project is to study challenges fourth graders encounter in reading English second language in Eenhana Circuit. I will be grateful if you allow me to conduct my research at your school that selected randomly. Furthermore, teachers with whom I will be working with will be requested to complete a questionnaire. Classroom observation for recording the learners' pronunciation in phonics reading test, pseudo word reading test and a single word reading test shall be conducted. The teachers' interview, discussions and learners' pronunciation shall be tape-recorded for transcription thereafter.

From every selected school eight learners will be randomly selected, four girls and four boys from each school to represent their school. So, I humbly request teachers of the selected schools to give the attached 'Parental or Guardian Permission Form' to the parents of the selected learners for them to sign by indicating whether or not they wish to allow their children to participate in this project.

The school and teachers are assured of anonymity in the final research report and the transcription shall be returned to the teacher involved to proof read and for making final comments.

Enclosed please find research permission letter from my supervisor at UNAM, permission letter from Permanent Secretary of Education, permission letter from Inspector of Eenhana Circuit, Parental or Guardian Permission Form, Grade 4 teacher's questionnaire and teacher's interview schedule which shall be recorded.

I hope that this request will be granted. Should you have any further concerns and/ or queries about this request, please contact me at 0608068862 during working hours and 0812592056 after hours or email me at nndahambelela@gmail.com

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

.....
Ndahambelela Pefewa Nepando

Appendix 4: Consent Letter from Inspector of Education



OHANGWENA REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION
EENHANA CIRCUIT

PRIVATE BAG 88005, EENHANA, TEL/FAX 264 65 263026/

Inquiries: Anna N. Hako
E-mail: eenhanacircuit@gmail.com

23 April 2014

To: Ms. N.P. Nepando
Onanona CS
Eenhana Circuit

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS IN EENHANA CIRCUIT

I refer to your letter dated 10 April 2014 in which you requested for permission to conduct an educational research in Eenhana circuit schools.

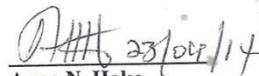
The Ohangwena Education Directorate, specifically Eenhana circuit support your intention to visit schools for your selected Master Degree research "Challenges fourth graders encounter in reading English second language in Eenhana circuit". Permission is granted to visit the selected schools; however, ensure that teaching and learning processes are not interrupted. Hence, arrange your visit with the school principal concern.

You are kindly requested to furnish the office of the Inspector of Education, Eenhana circuit with a copy of your research for use in schools as reference for better teaching English second language in grade four.

I wish you all the best with your research activity.

Sincerely yours





Anna N. Hako
Inspector of Education
Eenhana Circuit

Appendix 5: Letter to the school Principals

Post Office Box 286

TSUMEB

Namibia

Date

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct a research in your schools

I am a part-time student with University of Namibia and my student number 8718512. I have been studying for a Master of Education Degree (Literacy and Learning). I would be grateful if you will allow me to use your schools as my research site for the research report which I am required to write.

The aim of my research project is to study challenges fourth graders encounter in reading English second language in Eenhana Circuit. If I am allowed to conduct my research at your six schools that will be selected randomly, I will further ask the school principals for permission to go into schools and conduct this research. Furthermore, teachers with whom I will be working with will be requested to complete a questionnaire. Classroom observation for recording the learners' pronunciation in phonics reading test, pseudo word reading test and a single word reading test shall be conducted. The teachers' interview, discussions and learners' pronunciation shall be tape-recorded for transcription thereafter.

The school and teachers are assured of anonymity in the final research report and the transcription shall be returned to the teacher involved to proof read and for making final comments. I hope that this request will be granted. Should you have any further concerns and/ or queries about this request, please contact me at 0608068862 during working hours and 0812592056 after hours or email me at nndahambelela@gmail.com

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

.....
Ndahambelela Pefewa Nepando

Appendix 6 (a): Consent letters to the parents

Parental or Guardian Permission Form for Research Involving a Minor

Title of Project: CHALLENGES FOURTH GRADERS ENCOUNTER IN READING ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE

Researcher: Ndahambelela Pefewa Nepando, Cell no: 081 259 2056

Date:..... 2014

Dear Parents or Guardian

I am a part-time student with University of Namibia. I have been studying for Master of Education Degree (Literacy and Learning). I request permission for your child to participate in my (pilot) study.

The aim of my research project is to study challenges fourth graders encounter in reading English second language in Eenhana Circuit. Classroom observation for recording the learners' pronunciation in phonics reading test, pseudo word reading test and a single word reading test shall be conducted.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your child's participation in this study will not lead to loss of any benefits to which he/she is otherwise entitled. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with your child will remain confidential. Learners are assured of anonymity in the final research report.

I hope that this request will be granted. Should you have any questions or desire further information, please call me at 0608068862 during working hours and 081 259 2056 after hours email me at ndahambelela@gmail.com

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

.....
Ndahambelela Pefewa Nepando
(A Researcher)

Please indicate whether or not you wish to allow your child to participate in this project by checking one of the statements below.

_____ I grant permission for my child to participate in the project.

_____ I do not grant permission for my child to participate in the project.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Printed Parent/Guardian Name

Printed Name of Child

Date

Appendix 6 (b): Letters to teachers

Dear Grade 4 teachers

I am registered for Master of Education Degree (Literacy and Learning) with University of Namibia. To qualify for my Master's Degree I am required to write a research report that specifically looks at the challenges fourth graders encounter in reading English second language. In this case, I will be requiring answering the following research questions:

- What challenges hampered the reading proficiency of reading English as second language in Grade 4?
- Which recent teaching strategies utilized in teaching reading English in Grade 4?
- How do teachers assess the pupil's abilities in phonemic awareness and knowledge of alphabetic among the Grade 4 pupils?

I request that you assist me to answer the above research questions by completing the attached consent forms.

Your anonymity in this research is guaranteed.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

.....

Ndahambelela Pefewa Nepando

Appendix 7: Questionnaire for teachers

QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT THE CHALLENGES FOURTH GRADERS ENCOUNTER IN READING ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE, TO BE COMPLETED BY GRADE 4 ENGLISH TEACHERS IN EENHANA CIRCUIT.

Dear respondent

Thank you for your willing to take part in this research. The aim of this research is to investigate the challenges fourth graders encounter in reading English second language in Eenhana Circuit in Ohangwena educational region.

Instructions:

- There are no right nor wrong answers to the questions contained in this questionnaire.
- To ensure confidentiality of your response you are not required to write your name on this questionnaire.

Section A: Biographical information

In this section I would like to know a little bit about you, how do you teach reading English to your learners and the challenges your learners encounter in reading English as a second language. In the following questions please circle the appropriate box or write an answer in the space provided where applicable.

1. Name of cluster center?

.....

2. Name of the school?

.....

3. In which age group do you belong?

<20	1
21 – 30	2
31 – 40	3
41 – 50	4
51 – 60	5

4. Which position do you have at school?

Principal	1
HOD	2
Teacher	3

5. Gender

Male	1
Female	2

6. How long have you been teaching?

<5	1
5– 10	2
11– 20	3
21– 30	4

31– 40	5
--------	---

7. How long have you been teaching English language to the Grade 4 learners?

<5	1
5– 10	2
11– 20	3
21– 30	4
31– 40	5

8. What is your highest academic qualification you have?

Grade 12	1
B.A	2
B.Sc.	3
M.A	4
M.Sc.	5
Other (specify)	6

8. What professional teacher qualification do you have?

HED	1
BETD	2
M.Ed.	3
M.Ed.	4
None	5
Other (specify)	6

9. What did you specialise in at College or University?

English	1
Oshikwanyama / Oshindonga	2
Social Science	3
Arts	4
Other (specify)	5

10. Do you have a school or class library?

Yes	No
-----	----

10. If yes, are your learners able to take books from the school library to go and read at home?

Yes	1
No	2
Sometimes	3
Do not know	4
Cannot tell	5

11. Which of the following methods of teaching reading are you familiar with?

Phonics method	1
Whole word reading method	2
Story method	3
The combination of methods (e.g. phonics and whole word)	4
None	5

Other (specify)	6
-----------------	---

12. Of the methods referred to above, which one(s) do you use in your class?

Phonics method	1
Whole word reading method	2
Story method	3
The combination of methods of methods (e.g. phonics and whole word)	4
Specify	5
None of the above	6

13. If you use any of the methods of teaching reading referred to above, do you use it/them because:

Your training inform you it is the best method	1
In your opinion, it is the best method	2
The Ministry of Education prescribed it as the best method of teaching reading	3
Other reasons, specify	

14. Describe how you teach English reading in your English lessons:

.....

.....

.....

THANK VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.

Appendix 8: Teachers' Interview Schedule

TEACHERS' INTERVIEW SCHEDULE:

1. What methods of teaching reading do you use in your class?

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

2. Describe how you teach reading using the method(s) you referred to in Question 1 above:

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

3. Are there learners who struggle to learn to read in your class? YES / NO

4. If yes, what do you think are the causes of challenges of reading?

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

5. For those who encounter challenges to learn to read, what is the nature of their reading problem?

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

6. Are there resources and/or experts available at school level and or ministerial level to help the struggling learners with reading literacy? YES / NO

7. If yes, how do these resources and / or professionals help the struggling learners with reading literacy?

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

8. Anything you would like to share regarding teaching reading in English language?

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

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.

Appendix 9: Classroom Observation Instrument

Name of school:

Date of Observation:

Name of teacher:

Qualification:

Years of teaching experience:

Class:

Subject:

Lesson topic:

Number of learners:

KEY FOR:

1. Correctly and effectively used
2. Well used
3. Needs improvement
4. Poorly used

1. LESSON PRESENTATION	1	2	3	4
A. The teacher introduced the reading lesson well by using contextual pictures, real objects or stories.				
B. The materials used were up to the learners' level.				
C. The reading, listening, writing and speaking skills were all well integrated.				
D. Learners meaningfully participated in the reading activities				

E. Reading activities such as reading aloud, reading silently and answering questions were at the learners' level of understanding.				
F. Learners were supported by correcting their spelling and pronunciation mistakes while reading.				
G. The content of the text used is familiar to the learners and was accompanied by pictures.				
H. The teaching and learning media were appropriately used by giving all learners reading books or handouts to follow while the teacher or other learners are reading.				

2. TEACHING METHODS USED DURING THE PRESENTATION

2.1 PHONICS METHOD	1	2	3	4
A. Teacher uses limited set of letters when teaching reading, e.g. two, three or four letter-words.				
B. Teaching reading by identifying common sounds in words.				
C. Teaching children letter-sounds correspondence.				
D. Teaching children how to blend sounds to form a new word.				
E. Teaching children how to build a word from the given letter.				
F. Gradually more letters are added.				

Appendix 10: Learners' tests

ENGLISH INDIVIDUALLY ADMINISTERED TESTS

INDIVIDUAL TESTS

CASE NUMBER : _____

NAME OF CHILD: _____

GRADE: _____

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

AGE OF CHILD: _____ SEX _____

CHILD'S DATE OF BIRTH: _____

EXAMINER: _____

English Individual Tests

	EWR	ENWR	EBEGPHON	EEPHON	EDSFOR
Total Errors					
Total Correct					
Total Items	70	10	10	10	12
% Correct					
Words Correct in 1 min.					
Testing Time					
Complete Row Points					
Longest Span					

	EDSREV	ERNLD	ERNCOL
Total Errors			
Total Correct			
Total Items	12	40	40
% Correct			
Testing Time			
Longest Span			

English Individual Tests, cont.

	Word Interference Task	ESODIS
Total Errors		
Total Correct		
Total Items	40	20
% Correct		
Testing Time		
Interf. Level		

1. ENGLISH SINGLE WORD READING

SCORE 1 POINT FOR EACH COMPLETE ROW. INCLUDE ALL COMPLETE ROW EVEN IF THE CHILD MAKES AN EARLIER MISTAKE.

WORD	CHILD'S RESPONSE	×	√	WORD	CHILD'S RESPONSE	×	√
1. Say				37. angel			
2. Up				38. ceiling			
3. Book				40. dentist			
4. Eat				41. heavy			
5. Run				42. fighting			
6. Look				43. morning			
7. axe				44. nephew			
8. sit				45. relative			
9. dress				46. cupboard			
10. car				47. Saturday			
11. toss				48. opposite			
12. duck				49. assembly			
13. road				50. pineapples			
14. cow				51. something			
15. train				52. diseased			
16. table				53. university			
17. name				54. friendship			
18. dogs				55. knowledge			
19. rice				56. window			
20. meal				57. shouted			
21. read				58. picture			
22. this				59. campaign			
23. brother				60. choir			
24. driver				61. intercede			
25. parents				62. fascinated			
26. jeans				63. saddle			
27. faraway				64. siege			
28. breakfast				65. recent			
30. birthday				66. litterbugs			
31. category				67. prophecy			
33. begin				68. colonel			
34. small				69. soloist			
35. island				70. systematic			
36. standing							

STOP. END OF ENGLISH WORD READING LIST.

TOTAL ERRORS	
TOTAL CORRECT	
TOTAL ITEM	
% CORRECT	
WORDS READ CORRECTLY IN 1 MIN.	
TESTING TIME	
COMPLETE ROW POINTS	

SINGLE WORD READING TEST QUALITATIVE OBSERVATIONS

(Note: how frequently a behavior occurred by checking the appropriate box)

KEY:

N: NEVER

S: SELDOM

O: OFTEN

A: ALWAYS

N/O: NOT OBSERVED

SINGLE WORD READING TEST QUALITATIVE OBSERVATIONS	N	S	O	A	N/O
A. Substitutes a visually similar letter when identifying letter.					
B. Provides nonword responses for rhyming words.					
C. Pronounce words automatically.					
D. Laboriously “sounds out” words.					
E. Self-corrects errors.					
F. Loses his/her place when reading.					
G. Adds, omit, or transposes syllables when reading words.					

2. ENGLISH NON-WORD READING TEST.

SCORE IS THE TOTAL CORRECT ANSWERS.

×	√	WORD	TARGET WORD	×	√	WORD	TARGET WORD
		1. Dat	cat/fat			6. bing	sing
		7. srog	frog			7. funger	hunger
		8. dake	bake/cake			8. fartoan	cartoon
		9. pish	fish			9. treedom	freedom
		10. sarm	farm			10. bick	pick

STOP. END OF ENGLISH NON-WRD READING TEST.

TOTAL ERRORS	
TOTAL CORRECT	
TOTAL ITEMS	
% CORRECT	
TESTING TIME	

3. ENGLISH BEGINNING PHONEME TEST:

SCORE TOTAL OF CORRECT ANSWERS. IF THE WORDS ARE REPEATED, SCORE HALF A POINT FOR EACH SET.

WORDS	WORDS WITH SAME SOUND AT BEG.	WORDS WITH DIFF. SOUND AT BEG.	CHILD'S RESP.	×	√	REPEAT SCORE
1.door doom floor	DOOR DOOM	FLOOR				
2.broom drink block	BROOM BLOCK	DRINK				
3.pot hot pork	POT PORK	HOT				
4.kill hold king	KILL KING	HOLD				
5.cat bald cold	CAT COLD	BALD				
6.wait vet wet	WAIT WET	VET				
7.hot tight high	HOT HIGH	TIGHT				
8.false pipe fast	FALSE FAST	PIPE				
9.unit full union	UNIT UNION	FULL				
10.train tail fail	TRAIN TAIL	FAIL				

STOP. END OF BEGINNING PHONEME TEST.

TOTAL ERRORS	
TOTAL CORRECT	
TOTAL ITEMS	
% CORRECT	
TESTING TIME	

4. ENGLISH ENDING PHONEME TEST:

**SCORE TOTAL OF CORRECT ANSWERS. IF WORDS ARE REPEATED,
SCORE HALF A POINT FOR EVERY SET.**

WORDS	WORDS WITH SAME SOUNAT END	WORDS WITH DIFFERENT SOUNDS AT END	CHILD'S RESPONSE	×	√	REPEAT SCORE
1.bus dam bees	BUS BEES	DAM				
2.frog blind mind	BLIND MIND	FROG				
3.money love honey	MONEY HONEY	LOVE				
4.bath father path	BATH PATH	FATHER				
5.drive nine scream	DRIVE NINE	SCREAM				
6.black crop flock	BLACK FLOCK	CROP				
7.knife right eight	RIGHT EIGHT	KNIFE				
8.old cold hot	OLD COLD	HOT				
9.puff buzz huff	PUFF HUFF	BUZZ				
10.fond box fox	BOX FOX	FOND				

STOP. END OF ENDING PHONEME TEST.

TOTAL ERRORS	
TOTAL CORRECT	
TOTAL ITEMS	
% CORRECT	
TESTING TIME	

5. SHORT-TERM MEMORY: ENGLISH FORWARD DIGIT SPAN.

SCORE 1 POINT FOR EACH CORRECT RESPONSE (FIRST SCORE) AND A SECOND SCORE FOR THE LONGEST DIGITS A CHILD ANSWERS.

DIGITS	CHILD'S RESP.	×	√
6 5			
4 7			
3 0 7			
4 5 0			
2 0 3 4			
2 3 4 0			
6 7 2 3 6			
4 5 1 4 3			
5 6 1 7 2 5			
0 3 8 9 3 2			
3 6 0 3 5 7 6			
8 2 1 3 9 7 6			

STOP. END OF STM: DIGIT SPAN TEST.

TOTAL ERRORS	
TOTAL CORRECT	
TOTAL ITEMS	
% CORRECT	
LONGEST SPAN SCORE	
TESTING TIME	

6. SHORT TERM MEMORY: ENGLISH REVERSE DIGIT SPAN.

SCORE 1 POINT FOR EACH CORRECT RESPONSE (FIRST SCORE) AND

A SECOND SCORE FOR THE LONGEST DIGIT A CHILD ANSWERS.

DIGITS	CHILD'S RESPONSE	×	√
4 5			
6 4			
8 2 8			
3 1 4			
2 0 4 6			
9 1 4 5			
5 6 9 5 4			
7 0 2 1 0			
1 3 5 2 3 6			
2 1 0 3 0 4			
3 5 4 3 1 5 8			
1 1 0 4 5 4 3			

STOP. END OF ENGLISH REVERSE DIGIT SPAN TEST.

TOTAL ERRORS	
TOTAL CORRECT	
TOTAL ITEMS	
% CORRECT	
LONGEST SPAN SCORE	
TESTING TIME	

**7. RAPID AUTOMATIC NAMING (RAN)-ENGLISH LINE DRAWINGS.
SCORE IS TIME TAKEN, TO THE NEAREST SECOND, TO COMPLETE
THE NAMING. ADD 2 SECONDS FOR EACH UNCORRECT ERROR.**

Practice Card: ----- secs.

Test Card: ----- secs.

STOP. END OF RAN: LINE DRAWINGS.

**8.RAPID AUTOMATIC NAMING (RAN)-ENGLISH RAPID COLOR
NAMING.**

**SCORE IS TIME TAKEN, TO THE NEAREST SECOND, TO COMPLETE
THE NAMING. ADD 2 SECONDS FOR EACH UNCORRECTED ERROR.**

Practice Card: ----- secs.

Test Card: -----secs.

STOP. END OF RAN: COLOR NAMING.

9.ENGLISH STROOP INTERFERENCE TEST.

Practice Card: -----secs.

Testing Card: -----secs.

STOP. END OF STROOP TEST.

**DERIVE AN INTERFERENCE LEVEL IN SECONDS. THE TIME
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RAN: COLOR NAMING AND THE STROOP
TEST WILL BGIVE THE INTERFERENCE LEVEL IN SECONDS.**

INTERFERENCE LEVEL IN SECONDS: ----- secs.

10. PERPETUAL TASKS: SOUND DISCRIMINATION.

SCORE TOTAL CORRECT ANSWERS.

WORDS	S	D	×	√	WORDS	S	D	×	√
1.act cat					11.hot hot				
2.sun sat					12.cake coke				
3.cot not					13.knife wife				
4.money honey					14.gold bold				
5.love live					15.child wild				
6.soon noon					16.brick black				
7.torn born					17.many marry				
8.graph laugh					18.dig dog				
9.some some					19.warm warn				
10.bird birth					20.hug tug				

STOP. END OF SOUND DISCRIMINATION TEST.

TOTAL ERRORS	
TOTAL CORRECT	
TOTAL ITEMS	
% CORRECT	
TESTING TIME	

STIMULUS CARDS FOR ENGLISH INDIVIDUALLY ADMINISTERED TESTS

- ✓ **Rapid Automised Naming of familiar objects task.**
- ✓ **Practice card for rapid colour naming and word interference.**
- ✓ **Rapid colour naming of familiar colours task.**
- ✓ **Congruous colour naming task.**
- ✓ **Incongruous word interference (Strop) task.**

Rapid naming task



Introduction to colour training:



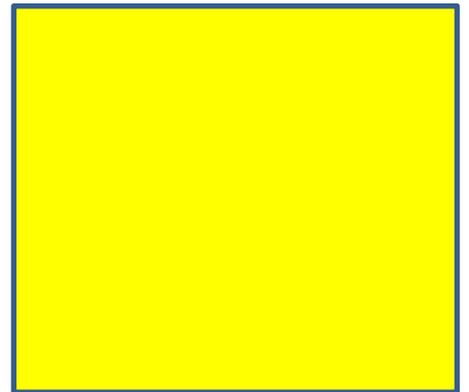
Green



Blue



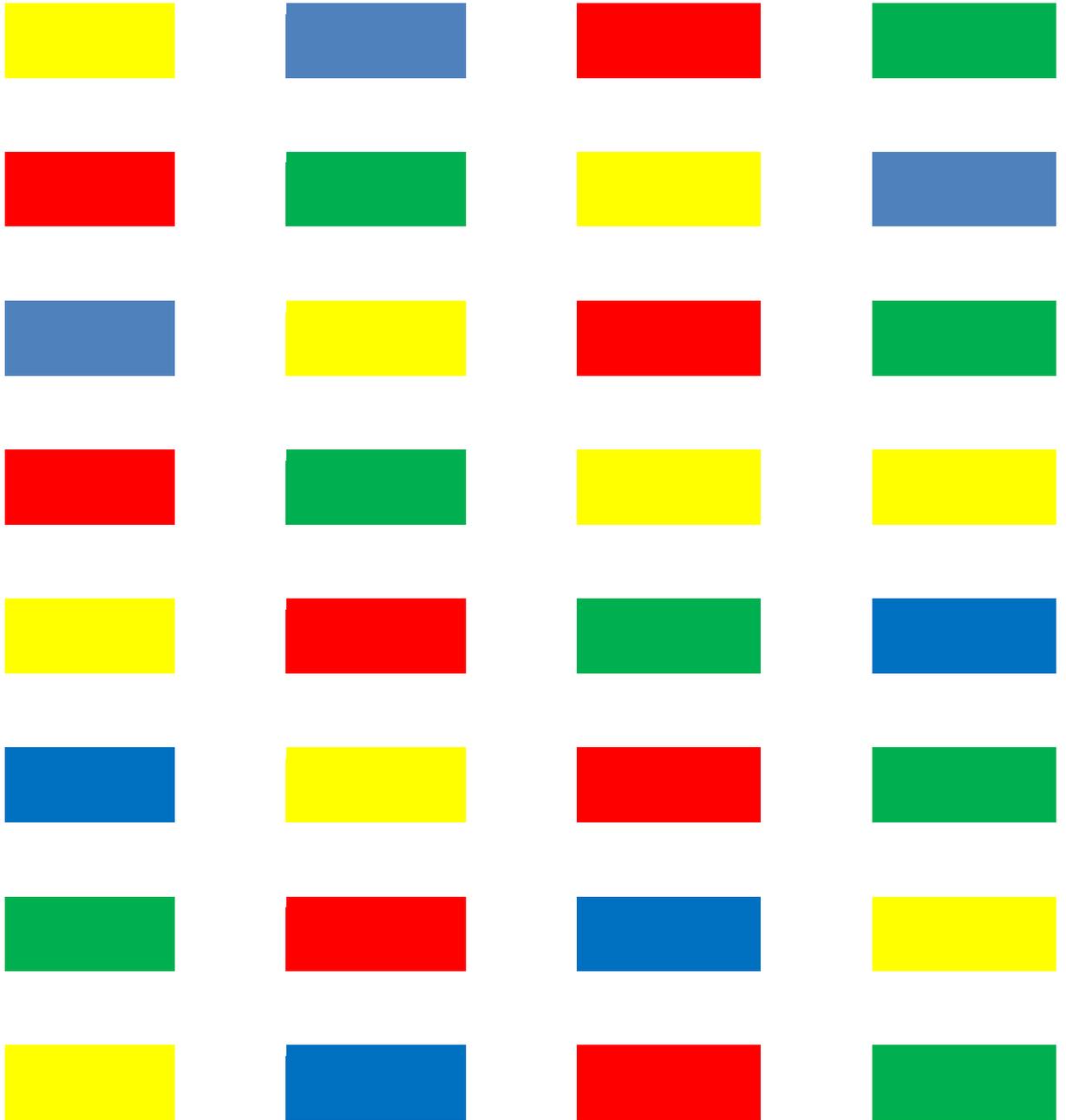
Red



Yellow

Colour Blocks (4 by 10)





Teacher-learner interaction on (CT):

Blue

Red

Yellow

Blue

Green

Blue

Red

Yellow

Green

Yellow

Green

Red

Green	Green	Yellow	Red
Blue	Green	Yellow	Yellow
Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
Blue	Red	Green	Green
Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red
Yellow	Blue	Blue	Yellow
Red	Red	Green	Green
CT (b&w)			
Yellow	Green	Red	Red
Blue	Yellow	Red	Blue
Blue	Red	Yellow	Yellow
Blue	Red	Green	Blue
Red	Green	Yellow	Yellow

Green	Green	Blue	Green
Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow
Red	Yellow	Green	Green
Red	Yellow	Blue	Red
Green	Red	Yellow	Blue

CB (nc)

Blue	Red	Yellow	Blue
Green	Blue	Red	Yellow
Green	Yellow	Green	Red
Green	Green	Yellow	Red
Blue	Yellow	Green	Blue
Green	Yellow	Red	Yellow
Blue	Red	Yellow	Green
Yellow	Blue	Yellow	Red
Blue	Green	Blue	Yellow
Green	Red	Yellow	Green