

CHALLENGES OSHIKWANYAMA FIRST LANGUAGE TEACHERS FACE IN
IMPLEMENTING READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS AT SIX SELECTED SCHOOLS
IN THE KHOMAS REGION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated challenges that Oshikwanyama First Language secondary school teachers and learners face in implementing reading comprehension skills at six selected schools in Khomas Region. The study focused on the strategies that Oshikwanyama First Language teachers employ to teach Reading Comprehension Skills to Grade 12 learners in the Khomas Region. The study was centred on the *Schema* Theory, which served as the main framework for the qualitative data analysis. The theory signifies that there is no text that reveals a complete meaning, but it instead provides direction for the audience to build up or form meaning from previously acquired knowledge. Knowledge schemata are classified as follows: knowledge of the world and its conventions; knowledge about the way different types of texts are organised; and knowledge about the context. Evidence based on the *Schema* Theory was especially useful to interpret the challenges of reading comprehension from the learners' perspective because it is easy to draw conclusions from the formula of the knowledge schemata that if learners do not have knowledge of the world and its conventions, about the way different types of texts are organised, and about the context, then comprehension will be impossible to take place. The study used the phenomenology design for data collection because the study is interpretative in nature; it sought to understand the phenomenon from the participants' viewpoint, rather than proving statistical data. Moreover, the study employed the qualitative research approach because it explored the challenges that Oshikwanyama L1 teachers and learners face when teaching reading comprehension in their natural setting, which is the classroom. Data were collected using questionnaires, reading comprehension test for learners, and observation and interviews with the Oshikwanyama L1 teachers and learners. Data were analysed by identifying patterns from the entire data source and collapsing them into the categories of the teachers and learners as main factors that affect or hinder

the implementation of reading comprehension, which were themes that were mainly influenced by four main research questions. The study revealed that both teachers and learners are contributing factors to the poor reading comprehension. The study found that not all Oshikwanyama L1 teachers are qualified to teach the subject/language and that they do not employ sufficient teaching strategies and methods to teach reading comprehension. Teachers are challenged by the fact that: learners have poor basic reading skills in Oshikwanyama; there is insufficient time to cover the syllabus; learners have a poor vocabulary, and learners often lack background knowledge. On the part of the learners, the study revealed that learners face the following challenges: they have insufficient time to answer reading comprehension questions; some passages consist of difficult texts and terms; unfamiliar use of figurative language and parts of speech, and the lack of resources. Finally, in terms of possible solutions, teachers and learners suggested: improving teaching and learning strategies; improving and enhancing reading skills and strategies; instilling the reading culture; teaching learners to manage time; and finally, teaching and enhancing learners' vocabulary.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Late son, Tulonga, whom I was nursing while writing this thesis.

May his soul continue resting in peace!

DECLARATIONS

I, Vilima Ngonyofi Haukongo, hereby declare that this study 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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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

The first appendix contains the detailed description of the data used in the study. It includes information on the source of the data, the time period covered, and the variables included in the analysis. The data was obtained from the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) and covers the period from 1980 to 1990. The variables included in the analysis are the real gross domestic product (GDP), the real interest rate, and the real wage rate. The data is presented in Table I.1.

The second appendix contains the detailed description of the econometric model used in the study. It includes information on the functional form of the model, the estimation method used, and the results of the estimation. The model is a simple linear regression model with the following functional form:

$$Y_t = \alpha + \beta X_t + \epsilon_t$$

where Y_t is the dependent variable, X_t is the independent variable, α is the intercept, β is the slope coefficient, and ϵ_t is the error term. The model is estimated using ordinary least squares (OLS) and the results are presented in Table I.2.

The third appendix contains the detailed description of the statistical tests used in the study. It includes information on the tests used to test the null hypothesis of no cointegration, the tests used to test the null hypothesis of no structural change, and the tests used to test the null hypothesis of no heteroskedasticity. The tests used are the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) test, the Phillips-Perron (PP) test, the Chow test, and the Breusch-Pagan test. The results of the tests are presented in Table I.3.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation to the study

The term 'reading comprehension' has several meanings, as its definition has been changing over the years. For instance, Cooper (1986, p. 3) defines reading comprehension as the "ability to recognise letters of print"; Grellet (1990) argues that reading comprehension is a highly complex process that operates on decoded language at various linguistic levels, whereas Crawley and Mountain (1995) assert that reading comprehension is the construction of meanings by interacting with the text.

Although there are paradoxes in the definition, present scholars in education agree with the National Reading Panel (as cited in Reutel & Cooter, 2012) that defines reading comprehension as a "complex process of essence reading, where intentional thinking is applied, and meaning is deduced as a result of interaction between the text and the reader" (p. 9).

Reflecting on the findings of his study, Grellet (1990) points out that "reading comprehension is crucial for successful communication, as it requires solving daily problems, such as activities in the classroom, as well as outside the classroom" (p. 3). In the researcher's view, the ability to read helps individual learners to understand and follow instructions for tests and examinations, and to read guidebooks and poems in the classroom. Outside the classroom, reading helps learners to follow instructions (e.g. warning and direction labels, road signs, post cards, weather focus and newspaper). Thus, reading comprehension skills need to be taught at school.

In recent years, the Second National Development Plan report [NDP2], 2012/2013) of Namibia refers to the inability to read as a great risk. The NDP4 (2012/2013) adds that “the inability to read, as a national threat, was based on the discovery of many devastating and far-reaching effects that the failure to read had on the quality of individuals’ lives” (p. 87). Furthermore, NDP4 (2012/2013, p. 77) states that “low readers are a burden in all societies, as they remain uneducated, undereducated and uneducable, and they will forever depend on government funds for medical care, housing, and other social services”. These statements evidently imply that the inability to read is disadvantageous to a country, and it can deplete government resources in various ways. It is, therefore, safe to say that teaching reading comprehension is crucial to all citizens.

Oshikwanyama is one of the indigenous languages in Namibia, and it is incorporated as a first language (L1) in the curricula of schools right from primary to tertiary level. The first languages’ syllabi for Grade 11-12 are composed of four components which are reflected in the examination papers, namely: Reading and Directed Writing (Paper 1), Continuous Writing (Paper 2), Literature (Paper 3), and Listening (Paper 4) (National Institute of Education Development (NIED, 2010).

One of the units of the Reading and Directed Writing component teaches learners comprehension, and it includes activating and drawing on prior knowledge, making predictions based on evidence and prior experience with related narratives and expository. The component also teaches learners to generate and clarify cause-and-effect, comparisons and contrasts, logical sequences, and to summarise information from two or more given passages (NIED, 2010). Therefore, the Paper 1 examination requires learners to demonstrate these skills throughout the Secondary phase.

The researcher became aware of the serious nature of the problem in reading comprehension during the assessment and evaluation of the performance of the Grade 12 in Oshikwanyama First language (L1) and observed that Grade 12 learners do not perform very well especially in the Reading and Directed Writing component, which deals with reading comprehension passages.

Although Oshikwanyama L1 learners struggle in many areas of language, as indicated earlier, the focus of this study is on reading comprehension. Paper 1 does not only require learners to demonstrate knowledge and comprehension, but it also assesses for application, synthesis, and an argumentative understanding of the given passages (NIED, 2010).

From 2011 to 2016, the researcher has been one of the lecturers assessing Teaching Practice of the University of Namibia students. During the process, the researcher observed that Oshikwanyama L1 Higher and Ordinary Level teachers struggled to teach reading comprehension to learners; consequently, learners failed to develop and organise arguments into a text, they perform poorly overall, and they are unable to support arguments with evidence from the given passages due to the misinterpretation of information provided.

In their study, Kilfoil and Walt (1997) found that many South African learners read slowly, and they struggle with difficult words. Additionally, they state that learners read without focusing their attention on what they read, as indicated by their inability to retell or summarise the story they read. This situation is not different from the Namibian learners - and in the context of this study, to Oshikwanyama L1 learners in the Khomas region. Given that reading comprehension is

complex, it is not shocking that some learners have difficulties in many areas of the language component.

Blank (2000) agrees with Kilfoil and Walt (1997), arguing that the reason for the misinterpretation of information in reading comprehension is that interpreting a piece of text correctly is not an easy task since it does not entail merely recognising individual words. Blank (2000) explains that reading comprehension is a complex skill because it includes other skills such as decoding, so it is not surprising that many learners have difficulties with this skill. Most difficulties are caused by the fact that other cognitive and meta-cognitive processes also play a major role in the reading comprehension process (Carrell, 1983).

After reviewing various Oshikwanyama National Reports from the Directorate of National Examination Assessment (2010 - 2014), the researcher realised that all examination assessments conclude that written answers in the November/December examinations in Oshikwanyama L1 are worsening. Learners lack reading and writing skills, and following instructions such as comparing, contrasting, and summarising information from two or more texts. Thus, this observation left the researcher wondering how this problem may be addressed, and the possible solutions to remedy it. The reflection triggered the researcher to explore the possible solutions to implement reading comprehension.

This study was conducted in the Khomas Region, an urban area where most Ovawambo moved to, especially Windhoek (Ashton & Webb, 1986). However, Oshikwanyama is not the first language in the community, neither is it used as a medium of instruction.

1.2 Statement of the problem

One of the challenges that Oshikwanyama L1 teachers are currently facing is the ability to employ a variety of reading strategies to enhance high order thinking skills in the instruction of reading comprehension, enabling learners to become strategic and efficient readers. Grade 12 Oshikwanyama L1 Examination Reports for 2010 - 2014 reveal that the following problems were encountered during assessment and evaluation: lack of argumentative skills, the inability to write analytically, and the inability to monitor reading to develop and organise ideas into paragraphs. Furthermore, learners cannot predict, for example, the ending of a story; there were failure to use keywords, such as comparing, and they failed to summarise information from related passages.

Although the examination reports by DNEA 2010 – 2014 show that reading comprehension among Grade 11-12 is low, they do not clearly stipulate the causes. The possible assumptions of the researcher were that teachers' reading comprehension instructions are inadequate, or that learners are unwilling to learn.

It appears that the methods of teaching reading comprehension in Oshikwanyama L1 are not effective; it stresses on accuracy and reading aloud, rather than promoting the reading process of acquiring meaning from a text. In addition, not much attention is paid to the presentation of meanings and to ensuring learners' understanding of what is being read. It is therefore evident that the issue needs to be critically investigated, in order to establish how to improve teaching methods for reading comprehension.

Abraham (2001) and Cummis (1980) reveal that instruction abilities and teachers' own methodologies promote reading among high school learners; thus, the use of reading comprehension strategies and techniques can improve teachers' instruction abilities, enabling them to teach or instil the competence to read, which will then result in an improved performance.

The researcher was puzzled as to why Oshikwanyama L1 teachers in the Khomas Region struggled to teach reading comprehension. This concern prompted the researcher to investigate how Oshikwanyama L1 teachers at the six selected secondary schools in Khomas Region employ a variety of reading strategies to teach reading comprehension. Furthermore, the researcher explored the challenges faced by learners regarding Oshikwanyama L1 reading comprehension and possible solutions.

1.3 Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1.3.1 Which teaching strategies do Oshikwanyama L1 teachers use for reading comprehension?
- 1.3.2 What are the challenges faced by Oshikwanyama L1 learners in reading comprehension?
- 1.3.3 What are the challenges faced by Oshikwanyama L1 teachers when teaching reading comprehension?
- 1.3.4 What are the possible solutions to improve the Oshikwanyama L1 reading comprehension?

1.4 Significance of the study

The study is of considerable value because it provides knowledge and insight into effective teaching strategies and techniques to overcome difficulties concerning the Oshikwanyama L1

reading comprehension. Furthermore, the recommendations from the study will help to improve Oshikwanyama learners' reading competencies.

1.5 Limitation of the study

The population of the study was limited to the Khomas region only because given the scope of the study, it was not necessary to cover many different regions. The findings of the study cannot be generalised to the rest of Namibia, as the sample is not an accurate representation of the country as whole. However, conclusions in terms of recommendations and solutions are not only limited to the Khomas Region, as they are applicable to any party involved in Oshikwanyama L1 or other language subjects experiencing problems with reading comprehension.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

This study was limited to teachers and learners from six secondary schools offering Oshikwanyama L1 at Grade 11- 12 level in the Khomas Region. Only 30 Oshikwanyama L1 learners and six teachers participated in the study.

1.7 Conclusion

Chapter 1 introduced the study by providing the background of the study. The chapter also described the statement of the problem, the research questions, and the significance of the study, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 discusses the literature that was reviewed in reading comprehension, as well as relevant concepts about reading in general. Finally, the chapter explains the theory that the study was centred on.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the literature review, and theoretical framework of the study, to elaborate on the principles and strategies of reading comprehension that informed this study. Since the focus of the study was to investigate the challenges that Oshikwanyama L1 teachers face when teaching reading comprehension, literature was reviewed to clearly understand the theories so that the challenges in teaching and learning could be defined.

2.2 An overview of reading comprehension

Traditionally, reading comprehension was attributed to the Behaviourist teaching methods that were popularised in 1950 and early 1960s. Rummelhart (as cited in Maria, 1990) explains that during the 1960s and 1970s, it was believed that if learners were taught word recognition (i.e. decoding), then understanding or comprehension would follow automatically (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Snow, Scarborough, & Burns, 1999). Snow et al. (1998) further assert that many teachers postulated that reading was synonymous to the process by which words are recognised - decoding (Blank, 2000; Spohn, 2001; Frith, 2001). Therefore, reading comprehension teaching was focused on word recognition skills, such as phoneme awareness, phonics, word study, and reading loud (Moats & Foorman, 2003). Cummis (1980) expresses a similar concern when he observed that assignments and exercises are centred on short passages, syllable words, and sentences.

Up to the 1970s, the focus on reading comprehension was on the text, where the meaning was being in the text - independent of the learner. The role of the learners was only to find the author's intent and the implicit meaning of the text (Maria, 1990; Snow et al., 1998; Flick, 2011).

Snow et al. (1998) conclude that this type of teaching had many weaknesses; in most cases, learners were asked to perform tasks, but they were not taught how to accomplish the assignments, nor were they taught the when and where of the reading comprehension processes (Kilfoil & Walt, 1997; Duffy & McIntyre, 1982). Surprisingly, the reading comprehension, as pointed out earlier, was only assessed and not taught (Snow et al., 1998; Cummis, 1980). This situation is not different from that of the Khomas Region, where reading comprehension is not taught, but it is only assessed. This situation means that the reading comprehension instruction of understanding or deriving meaning from written texts was considered an automatic outcome or product of word recognition, and it was therefore not regarded as a subject for special study or emphasis. Without a doubt, when learners did not understand what they read, their lack of understanding was attributed to the lack of intelligence, rather than to the lack of instruction (Snow et al., 1998; Snow et al., 1999).

However, the perception of reading comprehension has changed since the rebirth of research in the late 1980s. Already in the 1970s, Cognitivists shunned Behaviourism as a theory for language teaching and learning, and educators began to rely heavily on the research findings of interactive theories. Interactive theories of teaching emphasise the development of reading with understanding in a target language over the attainment of word recognition.

Cummis (1980) points out that although many of these theories and models of reading comprehension have been developed during the past three decades, most of them are similar in how learners, teachers, and texts are viewed. The approaches are also similar in the sense that the new view of reading comprehension that emphasises on the reading comprehension process, rather than the product of reading comprehension, also places the learner at the centre of the whole reading process. The process in which the learner actively searches for meaning is interactive in the sense that the learner's prior learning and experience continually interact to make meaning out of the passage with the assistance of the teacher.

To date, there has been an attempt to throw some light on the background of reading comprehension research, and the emphasis has currently been on interactive reading activities that involve the learners' knowledge and interest at all level of reading.

2.3 Instructional/learning theories

Educators all over the world have been struggling to find out how to teach and fulfil the needs of the learners in their language classroom, and Oshikwanyama L1 teachers in Khomas Region are not an exception, as they are also faced with challenges to teach reading comprehension in their classrooms. It is therefore imperative for these teachers to use theories that can help them to select appropriate strategies, methodologies, and reading models that can help to address the challenges they face when teaching reading comprehension.

There are many theories that describe how children generally learn, how they specifically learn languages, and how they learn to read and write. There are also reading theories (Duffy & McIntyre, 1982; Lovrich, 2006; and Lovrich & Cheng, 2003). This study focuses only on two theories of learning language and literacy, and sociolinguistic learning theories as proposed by Vygotsky (1962), and *Schema* theories proposed by Carrell (1983). These theories have affected the teaching and learning in the classroom.

2.3.1 Social-Constructivism Theory

Vygotsky is known for his belief in Social-Constructivism (Langer & Applebee, 1986). The Socio-Constructivism theories do not only focus on how adults and peers influence individual learning but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes impact the way teaching and learning activities take place (Cummis, 1980). Vygotsky's theory is referred to as the Social-Cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1962; Nunan, 1995). The Social-Cultural Theory puts an emphasis on learning and development is a collaborative activity, and the learners are cognitively developed in the context of socialization and education (Langer & Applebee, 1986). Vygotsky (1962) puts more emphasis on the interaction with peers and claims that learning occurs through a dialogue. He also argues that learning takes place in a social setting and in a cultural environment where the child grows and interacts with peers and adults through a dialogue (Hall & Piazza, 2008; O'sullivan, 2004).

The aspects of the learning theory as suggested by the Socio-Cultural theorists are given below. Scaffolding is an important aspect of Vygotsky's (1962) learning theory, which should be understood as a "temporary support that facilitates the learning process, but it can gradually be withdrawn as the learner becomes more independent (p. 55)". Over time, teachers eventually

dismantle the scaffolding practice, so that students increasingly become independent readers. In the Khomas Region, textbooks, maps, websites, television, and radio programmes could also facilitate scaffolding (Snow et al., 1999). However, schools in the Khomas Region are not equipped with Oshikwanyama books besides few textbooks.

The Socio-Cultural theories are on the exact support to be given to learners. Socio-Cultural theories recommend collaborative learning through group work, pair work, and individual work. Collaboration works, as Socio-Culturists argue, enable learners to learn from each other. Gradually, in many cases, learners will be able to pool their resources and assist one another to deal with reading selections that they could not successfully accomplish alone (Langer & Applebee, 1986). However, it is complex to apply scaffolding in the Khomas Region, where classes are often overcrowded, characterised with a shortfall of qualified teachers because the model is constructed around an ideal situation in which the expert works with the novice subjects on a one-on-one basis.

Another important element of Vygotsky's (1962) ideas is the notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners can learn new aspects that are slightly above their current understanding under the guidance of a facilitator, who can either be a teacher, an older learner, or an adult. Reutel and Cooter (2012, p. 42) define the ZPD as the "difference between what the child is capable of doing or solving on their own, and the capability to do something or solve a problem with the assistance of another person". The idea of the Zone of Proximal Development theory has some implications for both Oshikwanyama L1 learners and teachers. Whatever human beings

learn, they do not learn as isolated individuals but as members of society (Kilfoil & Walt, 1997; Cooper, 1986; Graves et al., 1998).

For Oshikwanyama L1 learners to acquire reading comprehension skills, they must be in a social setting, for example, in schools where they can learn how to summarise, how to monitor one's own reading, and to be able to develop note-taking skills. Oshikwanyama L1 teachers should, however, identify what learners have already learnt from the previous grades, and then build on that knowledge to assist them to solve arising problems, for instance by inferring, through silent reading, or by summarising. Deducing from what the Socio-Cultural theories advocate, one can safely argue that the teacher plays an important role as a participant in the social setting, where reading comprehension is taking place.

2.3.2 The Schema Theory

Richard Carrell Anderson (1983) views the mind as a complex set of structures, serving to organise and relate the experience in memory, so the process of background knowledge development is involved. According to this theory, schema includes knowledge structure and linking concepts, new information, inferring or instantiating certain experiences and information. These are then stored, retrieved and re-used by modifying, adjusting, and linking them to other ideas and concepts when necessary Carrell (1984). The theory postulates that a person uses his or her mental stores during learning. Mental stores help learners to determine how to interpret the task to be learned, and what knowledge to acquire. The theory simply signifies that no text reveals a complete meaning but rather provides direction for the audience to build up or form meaning

from previously acquired knowledge. According to Graves et al. (1998, p. 25), there are three types of knowledge of schemata, and they are discussed as follows:

a) Knowledge of the world and its conventions

This knowledge includes knowledge about the world, a shared culture, and a background, which is not necessarily taught in formal school. For example, the knowledge of the world that a person has may depend on their personal experiences, or on the general knowledge acquired through reading other experiences. This explanation means that shared culture and background knowledge or experiences facilitate comprehension to a certain extent.

The passages of the test given to learners (Appendix 2) to collect information for this study consists of many examples that can only be understood from the background knowledge of the Oshikwanyama culture. For instance, most Oshikwanyama homesteads are traditionally built with sticks and not with bricks. Also, the chickens are kept in the house, which is built with a secluded section for chickens far away from the huts within the homestead. Generally, it is difficult for non-Oshikwanyama people to understand the idea of chickens being kept in the house (within the homestead). In order to understand this concept, the reader must have a shared or experienced a culture with the Ovakwanyama people.

b) Knowledge about the way different types of text are organised

This knowledge pertains to the way different types of texts are organised. Tylor et al. (1988) posit that knowledge of different text structures and expectations from them facilitates reading comprehension. Therefore, most of this knowledge does not come from life experiences, but it originates from formal education.

In support of the view, Blank (2000) and Toran (2001) point out that the more readers know about a topic, the easier it is for them to comprehend the text. This would then mean that a text containing words such as 'eumbo' (a homestead), 'epata' (kitchenette or kitchen area) and 'omiti' (trees) will be comprehensible to readers who are familiar with the Oshikwanyama tradition and culture, as they will also be able to form a mental image. This knowledge of culture and tradition will mean that the reader will have a content schema. On the contrary, if a reader is not able to make sense of a text, it will be a typical example of a lack of schema that cannot fit with the content of the text (Reutel & Cooter, 2012).

c) Knowledge about the content

This knowledge refers to the knowledge about the content of specific subjects, which includes the content area related to information about different subjects, for example, Physics, Oshikwanyama, and Mathematics. This knowledge also includes being familiar with the subject matter of the text, understanding the topic that a text is talking about, and the cultural elements to interpret a text. Scholars, Cooper (1986) and McGuinness (2005) indicate that well presented physical texts, as well as unambiguous texts and clear instructions, all facilitate reading comprehension.

Abraham (2001) and Carrell (1983) explain that the underlying principle of how the background or prior knowledge interacts with new knowledge in the process of comprehension is crucial. In fact, it is the *Schema* theory that emphasises the importance of background knowledge, and it highlights problems that inadequate background knowledge can cause in reading. Principles of the *Schema* theory indicate that background knowledge is vital for successful reading comprehension.

Maria (1990) points out that many texts that are used in high school are about experiences that are more familiar to first language speakers. This means that Oshikwanyama L1 learners from the Khomas Region, who are exposed to various cultures and customs, are very likely to find it difficult to relate to the texts, unlike Oshikwanyama native speakers who reside in Oukwanyama and are, therefore, exposed to the culture and language in their daily lives.

To deal with this disparity, Reutel and Cooter (2012) suggest that learners should be helped to expand their schemas. Additionally, Cooper (1986), Maria (1990), Toran (2001), Sanker and Cockrum (2009) and Wessels (2011) recommend that teachers should focus on learners' strengths instead of their weaknesses, and to provide the necessary background for certain topic areas before moving on to the next text. In their study, Reutel and Cooter (2012) confirm that good readers incorporate strong vocabularies, effective syntax, and grammatical skills in their reading comprehension process. Moreover, teachers may take advantage of learners' rich vocabulary to teach reading comprehension.

Durkins (as cited in Reutel & Cooter, 2012) warns that over-reliance on the background knowledge may interfere with reading comprehension. Furthermore, Langer and Applebee (1986) advise that there should be a balance of background knowledge with other factors such as decoding, and linguistic knowledge should be strengthened in order to ensure effective reading.

It is evident that effective reading comprehension teaching should consist of a combination of background knowledge, decoding, linguistic competence, and the teachers' methodology to

promote the competence of reading comprehension among high school Oshikwanyama L1 learners.

2.4 Competences in reading comprehension

Learners in any given class, including Oshikwanyama L1 learners, have different competencies that determine their learning needs. It is therefore important that teachers understand their learners' needs so that they can deliver according to their needs. This knowledge of the competencies enables teachers to know the interests, weaknesses and strengths of their learners, and by extension, to identify students from different backgrounds. The competencies are presented as follow:

2.4.1 Competence with background/prior knowledge

The *Schema* theory emphasises the importance of background knowledge, and how it affects learners' reading comprehension. According to Reutel and Cooter (2012), children's background knowledge and experience are some of the most important contributors or inhibitors to comprehension.

As such, teachers are entrusted with the task to assist learners to activate their knowledge, considering that poor readers may have trouble with reading comprehension for a variety of reasons. Reluctant readers may not know how to use comprehension-fostering strategies, and they may not be effective in monitoring and fostering strategies as good readers (Blank, 2000). Therefore, depending on the learners' difficulties, Oshikwanyama L1 teachers can give learners a preview of materials to be read and to identify aspects of the story such as the setting, characters,

and the plot. Pre-questions, prediction, and direction setting have the role of directing learners' attention on what to look for as they read, highlighting several aspects of the text.

2.4.2 Competence with metacognition

Meta-cognition, also known as meta-comprehension, makes readers aware that they understand or do not understand as they read, or to monitor one's thinking. The benefit of modelling meta-cognition to learners is that they can assess their performance, and to especially make corrections during the reading process (Blank, 2000; Sanker & Cockrum, 2009), which will distinguish from unsuccessful readers who may not know the purpose of reading, and they may not be effective at monitoring their comprehension if they are not taught to do so (Tylor, Harris & Pearson, 1988)

Davey and Porter (as cited in Taylor et al., 1988) propose a four-step instructional procedure that is effective in teaching meta-cognition monitoring strategies, namely: understanding the purpose of reading; focusing attention on meaning, conversational reading; evaluating comprehension (still reading); and developing fix-up strategies, for example: re-reading or asking for clarification to improve comprehension.

2.4.3 Competence with linguistic experiences

Since reading is an aspect of language, learners' knowledge about language, vocabulary, syntax, text structure, structural cues, and conjunctions has an impact on reading comprehension. Abraham (2001) postulates that knowledge of syntax and the text structure can improve reading comprehension. It is therefore important that teachers ensure that learners have linguistic competence before the reading comprehension can be instilled.

2.4.4 Competence with motivation and success

This competence is grounded on the theory of Motivation as clarified by Crawley and Mountain (1995), who state that learners' quest to learn often leads to questions about success and failure. According to Crawley and Mountain (1995), learners who succeed in their examinations attribute their success and failure to external factors such as ability and effort. These learners tend to persevere in their learning; they are likely to yield positive results.

Conversely, learners who do not persevere in their school by failing their exams are more likely to attribute success or failure to external factors such as the difficulty of the task, the teacher's attitude, lack of luck and help. This trait of success and failure may be attributed to internal characteristic or external factors such as the setting or other people. An example of an internal characteristic could be when a learner blames failure on nervousness or poor memory. On the other hand, an example of an external factor may be uncondusive learning or study environments.

Kirmizi (2009) posits that reluctant learners may be attributed to factors that are beyond their control, such as teachers' attitude and bad luck. Consequently, learners are likely to lose their motivation to read, and they may doubt their ability to learn. High school learners who have not progressed with reading in their earlier years will require significant assistance from the teachers in fostering success and motivation, which will be crucial if they are to become successful readers. If learners continue struggling, they might lose their motivation to read, doubting their ability and feeling discouraged that to continue trying to solve their inadequacies (Feld, 2001; Guryan, Kim & Park, 2016).

Taylor et al. (1988) refer to the state of learners feeling helplessness as a 'passive failure syndrome', where they become nervous, withdrawn, and discouraged when they are faced with reading (Feld, 2001; Guryan et al., 2016). It is, thus, the responsibility of all teachers to avoid the destructive cycle of negative attitude among their learners. This responsibility means that Oshikwanyama L1 teachers are obliged to instil the feeling of acceptance in their learners by creating a learning environment that enables them to make and learn from their mistakes.

2.4.5 Competence with the text

Reading comprehension is positively affected when learners are interested in the reading materials. Nielen et al. (2016) emphasise that teachers need to know the kind of books and materials that will interest the learners and those that are congruent to the level of their learners.

Blank (2000) explains the importance of teachers choosing topics of interest to learners, as interest positively impacts learners' reading performance. It may be challenging to choose materials that are suitable for the whole class, simultaneously considering gender issues, learners' individual needs, as well as the background of individual learners. However, even though text selection is a daunting task, teachers should ensure that texts and assessment activities match the age, level, and the requirements dictated by the syllabus.

2.5 Reading comprehension strategies

The following strategies aid the comprehension process in the interactive instructional learning: asking questions, dialogue, inferences, and prediction. The reading strategies are "a deliberate, goal-orientated attempt to control and modify the readers' effort and to construct the meaning of

the text” (Hall, Burns, & Edwards, 2011, p. 85). These strategies are discussed to illustrate how they can support interactive instruction for reading comprehension.

2.5.1 Asking questions (reciprocal)

Asking questions is a vital skill of reading comprehension in the classroom especially for learners in higher grades. Teachers may ask questions during the instruction of comprehension to focus learners’ attention and to guide their thinking. Asking questions helps learners to keep track of what they are reading, enabling them to constantly see whether they understand what they are reading (Wessels, 2011).

In addition to asking questions, which implies that teachers ask questions to learners during instruction, Toran (2001) suggests teachers to encourage learners to employ the self-questioning technique when reading narrative texts. This technique increases involvement in the reading comprehension processes, it helps learners to focus attention on important information, and it helps learners and teachers to easily identify whether they understand the text (Sanker & Cockrum, 2009; Tylor et al.,1988).

Sanker and Cockrum (2009) reviewed instructional results that related to training learners in the self-questioning strategies to improve their comprehension. In the metacognitive analysis of 68 studies that were designed to improve reading comprehension for the learners with reading difficulties, Reutel and Cooter (2012) found that research studies that included some type of self-questioning resulted in greater improvement than instructional approaches that did not include self-questioning.

Maria (1990) accentuates that attention should be given to the type of questions that learners of different abilities are taught to ask. Learners with poor reading skills may benefit from the training in asking questions that monitor their comprehension, while those with good reading skills may benefit more from learning to ask critical evaluation questions. For Oshikwanyama L1, it is important that teachers combine two types of questioning for the benefit of learners with all abilities.

Hall, Burns, and Edwards (2011) confirm that having learners generate their own questions to answer improves reading comprehension. Each group comes up with questions that are then asked to other learners on an individual or group basis, and where there are divergent opinions, learners refer closely to the text to confirm or adjust their opinions. Teachers should, however, ensure that learners ask universal questions when they compose their own questions.

2.5.2 Dialogue

A dialogue, which is also referred to as a discussion, is a two-way communication between the speaker and the listener, which is critical to language teaching and learning (Langer & Applebee, 1986). Langer and Applebee (1986) explain that through a dialogue, learners develop self-regulatory abilities, so approaches that are basically socially mediated are eventually internalised, and they become part of the collection of the individual's abilities.

Langer and Applebee's (1986) view of the importance of dialogue resonates with that of Graves et al. (1998), who affirms that a dialogue is important, and it must be directed by an expert to bear

fruits; it should however not be mistaken with recitation, where the teacher asks question and learners answer. This means that the teacher should not take the lead the dialogue to the extent that it is only based on their point of view. This makes dialogues very difficult to manage; hence, many teachers do not incorporate this teaching strategy (Wessels, 2011). Thus, teachers should maintain activity flow, and they should hold learners' attention whilst engaging in a meaningful dialogue. Graves et al. (1998) and Cooper (1986) propose guidelines for organising and managing successful classroom discussions, and they will be discussed below:

Firstly, teachers should arrange the classroom in a way that will enable learners to engage in face-to-face interaction and to move easily from whole class to a small group organisation. Secondly, teachers should provide clear direction about the topic of discussion, and the goal and process of the discussion. Furthermore, teachers should keep the discussion focused on the main topic. Moreover, teachers should allocate sufficient time for discussion. Lastly, teachers should encourage a learner-to-learner interaction.

2.5.3 Prediction

The prediction strategy entails the skill or ability to foretell or guess what is happening in an upcoming portion in a text. In language instruction and assessment, the strategy is especially for learners to predict the ending or beginning of a certain story. When this strategy combines instructional approaches such as systematic silent reading and background knowledge, it may lead to high achievement in prediction especially for learners in higher grades (Graves et al., 1998).

Prediction requires that learners make “a best guess” from previewing a text, based on their background knowledge of the topic available to them (Reutel & Cooter, 2012, p. 295). When predicting, learners anticipate what might happen next, the order the event may take, or even the knowledge or the information they expect to be able to learn from reading the text.

Spohn (2001) advises teachers to help learners to acquire prediction skills for a story by showing them a series of pictures from a story and asking them to discuss what they think the story will be about; by reading to a certain point in a story, and then asking learners to tell or write the ending of the story; by asking learners to read chapter titles of a book and then they predict what the story will be about; and by reading to compare versions of a story. The curiosity and the urge to settle an argument motivates learners to read further, which may contribute to the learners’ internal motivation.

2.5.4 Summarising

Summarising, like asking questions, helps learners to focus on the important information of a text. It is a means of self-review, which enables learners to monitor their comprehension. This technique requires learners to identify appropriate sequences and important ideas found within a text (Cooper, 1986). Learners are asked to scan through many details, and then they come up with the most important ideas through paraphrasing and interacting important ideas in sentences, paragraphs, and across the entire text (Reutel & Cooter, 2012). Summarising helps learners to focus on important text information because it is a “means of self-examination that enables learners to monitor their comprehension and condense information (Panel, 2000).

Teaching learners how to summarise assists them to use their own words because summarising is not retelling the story as some teachers think. Summarising is a difficult strategy especially when learners are not taught how to do it. The best way to teach summarising, as Wessels (2011) explains, is to prepare learners through practice in understanding important words or sentences, finding the topic sentence and main ideas, and to perceive the structure of the text.

2.6 Reading techniques interactive learning

Scholars such as Cooper (1986), Grellet (1990) and Wessels (2011) reveal that learners with good reading skills apply various reading strategies and techniques for different reading purposes. It is therefore essential for learners to be made aware of these strategies and of how they can apply them in their own reading. Grellet (1990) states that because reading is purposeful, learners should use different reading speed for different purposes; learners should be able to use two different types of reading, namely:

2.6.1 Skimming

Skimming is a reading technique that focuses on finding specific information from a written text. Given that skimming enables readers to gather as much information as possible from a text in the shortest time possible, the technique may be important for Oshikwanyama L1 learners when reading within a limited time. The technique does not require learners to read everything; they simply need to look for outstanding features, such as the heading, subheading, pictures, and font size. Skimming is an effective way for learners to preview reading materials that they may later read more carefully (Grellet, 1990). The technique is important because it activates learners' background knowledge on the issue at hand.

2.6.2 Scanning

Scanning, on the other hand, is a technique used when reading swiftly, and efficiently extracting certain data from the written or printed materials. Grellet (1990) states that scanning is used to quickly find essential facts or instruction, eliminating the laborious reading of every word in the text. Moreover, scanning helps learners to run their eyes over a text quickly in order to locate specific information. For example, Oshikwanyama L1 learners can scan for information when they are searching for a person's name in the telephone directory, or when looking for certain pages with information from the index of a book (Grellet, 1990).

This reading technique is important because it saves time, and it is more appropriate for efficient, competent readers who can, among other things, complete a reading task efficiently without wasting time or effort (Moats & Foorman, 2003).

Teachers must always put limits on reading tasks by incorporating the time limit in instructions. For example: "you have a train to catch but you have only two minutes to find someone's number". In that way, all learners (including learners who are reluctant to read) will apply the scanning technique naturally. Teachers are encouraged to never assume that learners already know these techniques, as they might not have been taught in previous grades; teachers should, therefore, teach and demonstrate how and when the techniques should be used.

It is essential for the teacher to follow a structured procedure during the reading lesson in class. This will not only help learners to acquire these skills, but the teacher will also be a model for them.

2.7 Reading comprehension activities

Goldberg (2016) recommends an ideal procedure that can be used in a reading lesson, and it consists of three main stages, namely: pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading. Teachers can become more aware of these reading stages by using various activities in each of the stages, depending on the purpose of reading in each stage because reading is purposeful, so teachers should use different activities for different purposes, namely: pre-, during, and after reading activities (Grellet, 1990).

2.7.1 Pre-reading activities

Pre-reading activities prevent learners from ‘barking at print’ (reading the text fluently but without understanding). These activities help learners to preview headings and sub-headings, and to predict information that is included in the text (Abraham, 2001; Fischer & Goldberg, 2016). Pre-reading activities also help the teacher to determine what the learners know about the topic under study. Cooper (1986) suggests the following pre-reading activities: asking challenging questions to assess prior knowledge to activate and build background knowledge; reading the introduction and conclusion first; skimming for general ideas; pre-questions, purpose setting activities, and objectives; using advanced organisers and story previews to connect ideas; webbing and semantic maps; using pictures to make correct prediction; and using concrete materials, role-playing, and field trips.

2.7.2 During-reading activities

These activities are like pre-reading activities, and they focus on what learners do with the text as they read it (Martin, 2016). Auerbach and Paxton (as cited in Fischer & Goldberg, 2016) advise that teachers can use, for instance, pair reading, silent reading, and loud reading to make learners to understand what they are reading. To improve during-reading skills, teachers should teach their learners the 'post-its' strategy as they read. Learners can 'post-its' by asking questions, answering a question from fellow learners, expressing opinions, and connecting to real life (Gabby, 2016). Learners prepare notes that include key information, a new vocabulary, idioms, interesting descriptions, or whatever learners find appropriate (Spohn, 2001).

Teachers ought to ask questions to help learners to find their own strengths and weaknesses. Learners' strengths and weaknesses are often helpful to learners who use graphic cues, note taking, re-reading, and summarising paragraphs or sections as modelled to them (Toran, 2001).

Other useful activities in the during-reading stage are: skipping unfamiliar words, guessing from the context, predicting the main idea of each paragraph, and drawing pictures to express imagination (Martin, 2016).

2.7.3 Post-reading activities

Post-reading activities help learners to engage with the materials they have recently read, to transform their thinking into actions, and to think critically, logically, and creatively about the information and ideas that emerge from their reading (Graves et al, 1998; Martin, 2016). Instead

of asking short or multiple questions, learners may be asked to identify and select similarities and differences, and to make a mind map with several different ideas connected by arrows (Martin, 2016).

Martin (2016) suggests some post-reading activities such as, re-visiting pre-reading expectations; making an outline, chart, map or diagram of the organisation of the text at hand; retelling what learners think the author is saying; and relating the text to their own experience (p.13). It is worth mentioning that questions posed after a detailed reading of the text should seek for global understanding of the text, and it should not be the type of questions that act on individual sentences.

All three activities for the three reading stages are important, and teachers should ensure that they teach these activities to all levels of the learning process because they enhance active participation in reading comprehension activities.

2.8 Level of questions for reading comprehension

When employing the post-reading activities and questions, teachers should consider Bloom's six-level hierarchy of skills in his taxonomy (Wessels, 2011). The levels of questions are as follows:

2.8.1 Knowledge and comprehension

These questions include the identification and recall of information. Learners demonstrate recalling of information work by the definition of verbs, the plot of the story, rules or terminology in language lessons (Wessels, 2011). The problem with these questions is that they are often based on memorisation, while the ability to think creatively is ignored. Too many knowledge-based questions frequently result in tiredness, boredom, and shifting communication because they are generally closed-ended (Wessels, 2011).

In addition to knowledge-based questions, there are also comprehension questions that are probed at the low level. These questions involve learners transforming information in various ways, for instance, when answering interpretation questions or demonstrating insight, instead of repeating facts. The 'what', 'why', 'where', and 'how' questions all fall under literal questions. Although these questions are at the low-level order of thinking, they are very important in the classroom, as all other levels are built on the understanding of these questions. Thus, if learners do not clearly understand these questions, they may not be able to understand the text in a meaningful way.

2.8.2 Application

Unlike knowledge-based questions that require learners to respond at a literal level, the application is at higher order of thinking. Here, learners apply facts, rules, and principles to answer questions by using the information learned in the text (Martin, 2016). Learners must show the relations between texts, and s/he must provide examples for the answers and the significance of the given facts. All the answers come from the text that the learner reads by applying the information as

given in the text. Wessels (2011) argues that if a learner really knows and understands a concept and how it works, he/she will be able to apply it in practice.

In this level, learners are asked to make inferences or derive generalisations by, for instance, reading a recipe, and then they should be able to demonstrate it. In a language lesson, if a learner is told a story, they should be able to identify the plot, main character, the beginning and end of the story, and possibly predict the end of the story.

2.8.3 Synthesis

These questions require learners to combine several ideas to become one whole. In other words, synthesis is the combination of parts of a text to form a new whole story (Reutel & Cooter, 2012). Synthesis demands creativity since individual parts are used in a new or unique combination to form a whole. There are many possibilities that teachers can employ to apply synthesis in the classroom. For example, learners may form a group to role-play a radio program to be presented in class, panel discussions can be arranged, and various learners can be tasked with various responsibilities to perform as a group. Learners can also demonstrate awareness of issues through analysis. Furthermore, learners can compare articles in at least two newspapers covering the same news item or look at and compare issues found in the messages in stories from two different newspapers.

2.8.4 Evaluation

Evaluation requires learners to judge the value of the question. These types of questions are at the evaluation level of Blooms' taxonomy, and they require opinions, judgement, or decisions by the learner (Cooper, 1986; Martin, 2016). Most argumentative compositions fall under this category. Questions such as "do you think the death penalty will deter criminality in Namibia?" require the learner to make a judgement and to support his/her statement with facts.

Teachers should not assume that learners really understand the text by the fact that they are able to retell, summarise, or learn the vocabulary from the text. In order for learners to reach thinking at a higher level of comprehension, such as the ability to interpret, evaluate, and apply what they read, they need an experience with scaffolding, which will encourage them to critically question or discuss texts and make active meaning of what they read. Raphael and Au (as cited in Reutel & Cooter, 2012) discuss the following four strategies that teachers can teach their learners. Instruction in searching for answers in the text are as follows:

(1) **Right there:** The first guideline is that the answer is in one place in the text. Words from the question and those that answer the question is right there in the same sentence.

(2) **Think and search:** The second guideline is that the answer is in the text, and learners only need to think and search or put different parts of the text to find the answer. The answer can be within a paragraph, across paragraphs, or across chapters and books.

(3) **Author and me:** The answer is not in the textbook, so in order to answer the question, the learner needs to think about how the text and what they already know fit it together.

(4) **On my own:** The answer is not in the text, so learners need to use their ideas and experiences to answer the question.

Research has shown that learners who are able to use these strategies are likely to find answers within the text than those who are not taught these strategies. In their study to examine reading comprehension strategies on four L1 and L2 language readers, Reutel and Cooter (2012) confirm the importance of teaching comprehension instructions to quickly find answers from the passage being read.

It is evident from the literature review that few studies have been conducted in reading comprehension for Oshikwanyama L1 in Namibia and the Khomas Region in particular. There is, therefore, a scarcity of literature that specifically focused on reading comprehension for Grade 12 learners in Namibia, so the information from international scholars was contextualised in to fit the Namibian context.

2.9 Theoretical framework

This study was centred on the *Schema* theory that was discussed earlier in 2.3.2 as one of the prominent theories in (language) learning. The theory is in this section to illustrate its relevance to the teaching of reading comprehension in the First Language classroom.

The *Schema* theory emphasises the way reading comprehension is enhanced through active the active participation of the learner (Tylor et al., 1988). The theory was helpful for the study because it highlights the role that teachers or experts play in the learning process, which is to provide appropriate challenges and support for learners by: “(1) using learners’ existing knowledge as a starting point, (2) encouraging young people’s natural curiosity to learn through challenging tasks, (3) appreciating learners’ perspectives, and (4) involving learners as partners in, rather than receivers of, educational growth (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p.156)”.

The *Schema* theory was useful for this study, as it helped to explain how Oshikwanyama L1 learners can be taught reading comprehension with the assistance of an expert teacher. Oshikwanyama L1 learners need assistance because the theory indicates that ‘learners’ learn with the assistance of an expert teacher. Oshikwanyama L1 learners also require assistance to alleviate poor performance in tests and examinations.

This is an indication that reading comprehension needs to be taught and not only assessed. Oshikwanyama L1 teachers should therefore simplify the situation, clarify the structure, help the Oshikwanyama L1 learners to accomplish tasks that would otherwise be too difficult, and provide

the framework and rules of procedures that they will gradually learn so that the instructional support will eventually be no longer necessary.

Lastly, learners taking the responsibility of their learning in reading comprehension becomes relevant in the first language classroom because it responds to the learner-centered method that is currently introduced in Namibian classrooms and the focus of curriculum design.

2.10 Conclusion

Chapter 2 highlighted the research work of scholars whose focus is apposite to the area of language learning and reading comprehension. By reviewing literature, the researcher was able to gain insights about the area of reading comprehension and reading in general. Literature was useful in that it shed ample light on how data would be better presented and analysed in Chapter 4. Lastly, the chapter explained the theoretical framework that the study is centred on. The following chapter, Chapter 3, presents the research methodology that was used to collect and analyse data for the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that was used to collect data for the study. The methodology applied because the methodology is a “way to solve the research problem systematically, and it is a science of studying how research is done systematically” (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2011, p. 428). Merriam, (2015) explains that researchers “need to know how to apply particular research techniques, and to understand which of the methods or techniques are relevant to the research problem” (p. 234). This chapter discusses the research approach, population, sample and sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection procedures, pilot study, data analysis, and research ethics that were adopted by this study.

3.2 Research design

A research approach was used to steer and guide the researcher throughout the process of data collection. One of the approaches used in the qualitative studies is the phenomenology approach. To ensure a systematic completion of this study, the phenomenology approach was employed.

Patton (2015) explains that a suitable approach should be unique, economical, flexible and apposite to the study. Given the abovementioned characteristics of a suitable approach, it seems that the phenomenology approach was a relevant approach for this study because it is flexible, appropriate and efficient. The phenomenology approach was also appropriate for this study because it minimised the bias, and it maximised the reliability of the data collected and analysed (Babie & Mouton, 2009). The phenomenology approach provides a unique example of real people in a real

situation, which enables researchers to understand ideas more clearly, rather than simply presenting them with building theories.

The phenomenology design was appropriate for this study because the study was interpretative in nature; it sought to understand the phenomenon from the participants' viewpoint, rather than proving statistical data.

Even though Bazeley (2013) claims that the qualitative and the quantitative research approaches are better used together as mixed methods. This study only employed the qualitative approach because the study was concerned with investigating the challenges that Oshikwanyama L1 teachers face when teaching reading comprehension in their natural setting. The outcome of the study can therefore not be generalised to other educational regions besides the Khomas Region because it was only based on a few selected schools in the region.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2013) assert that "it is a basic view of the qualitative inquiry to seek a deep understanding of a phenomenon, rather than presenting them with statistical generalisations" (p. 8). Thus, this study did not rely on statistical procedures and generalisations, but it focused on organising data into patterns to produce a descriptive narrative synthesis.

Best and Khan (2009) define the qualitative research approach as an approach that "seeks to probe deeply into the research setting to obtain an in-depth understanding about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them" (p.77). The qualitative

approach was therefore ideal for this study because it required descriptive answers, allowing detailed information to gather findings for the study.

Furthermore, the approach provided the researcher with the opportunity for an in-depth inquiry (Bazeley, 2013) on how Oshikwanyama L1 teachers in the Khomas Region teach reading comprehension because the qualitative approach enabled the researcher to analyse the evidence gained from the participants (Merriam, 2015; Gray, 2009) who experience challenges in Oshikwanyama L1 on daily basis. This evidence was in the form of raw data (participants' voice), which was retained and presented through direct quotations from Oshikwanyama L1 teachers and learners. The evidence was used to prove and practise what Babie and Mouton (2009) refer to as a 'sense of being there' (p. 65).

The interview guide for learners (Appendix 3) and teachers (Appendix 4), questionnaires (Appendix 1) contained semi-structured and open-ended questions, and they were based on the challenges that Oshikwanyama L1 learners and teachers face in reading comprehension. Questions in the data collection tools or instruments are useful to answer the main research questions (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2011).

3.3 Population

Creswell (2013) defines a population as a "group of individuals who have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the study" (p. 8). The target population of this study was all the Grade 12 Oshikwanyama L1 teachers and learners in the Khomas Region. There are 13 Oshikwanyama L1 teachers and about 120 learners at the Kola Senior Secondary School,

Kakodi Senior Secondary School, Ndingili Senior Secondary School, Ndjaba Senior Secondary School, Kavandje Senior Secondary School, and Shimbungu Senior Secondary School (pseudonyms).

3.4 Sample and sampling procedures

Sampling is a method used to select a given number from the target population to represent it in the study (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2011). Purposive sampling was used to select five female teachers and one male teacher. A total of six Oshikwanyama L1 teachers were selected on the basis of extensive experience in teaching Oshikwanyama L1 and serving as markers for Oshikwanyama L1 end of the year examinations. The sample size was based on the idea that a minimal number of participants will generate an in-depth data that will provide a detailed insight into the situation being investigated (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013). This sampling method was done to create a sample that is relevant to the main objectives of the study, which Bell (2010) refers to as an “information rich” sample (p. 45), and which Best and Khan (2009) characterises as a “purposive sample” (p. 412).

Oshikwanyama L1 teachers were asked to identify five learners from their classes to participate in the study. Each teacher selected three female learners and two male learners, based on their competence in reading comprehension and writing skills. A total of thirty learners participated in the study.

In addition to the purposeful sample for the study, the researcher selected the schools using the convenience sampling procedure. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2011) define convenience sampling

as a “group of people, events, and subjects selected on the basis of being accessible and representative” (p. 134). The aim was to select a sample that would be representative of the population by drawing conclusions from the representative population. Teacher participants from the selected schools are a male and five females. The first school was coded as Kola Senior Secondary School and the Oshikwanyama L1 teacher was coded as Tuli. Then the other two schools were coded as Kakodi Senior Secondary School and Ndingili Senior Secondary Schools with the teachers coded as Ndaenda and Elly respectively. The fourth school was coded as Ndjaba Senior Secondary School and the Oshikwanyama teacher was coded as Ruty, while the fifth and sixth schools were coded as Kavandje Senior School and Shimbungu Senior Secondary School, whereas the teachers were coded as Tangi and Kalola. The schools were given pseudonyms as part of the ethical protocol, and for the sake of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity.

3.5 Research instruments

The researcher used the following instruments for data collection: observation checklist (Appendix 5), questionnaire for teachers (Appendix 1), Comprehension test for learners (Appendix 2), and an interview guide for learners (Appendix 3).

3.5.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a popular means of collecting different kinds of data in research, as it is widely used in educational research to obtain information about certain conditions and practises, and to inquire into opinions of an individual or a group. In this study, the questionnaire instrument was used with the intention to attain the profile, opinions, and attitude of Oshikwanyama L1 teachers, as well as the difficulties that they experience when teaching Oshikwanyama L1. Equally

important, the questionnaire was used to gain information on how teachers instruct reading comprehension and writing skills, which teaching strategies they use, and what they do to overcome teaching difficulties.

Bell (2010) proposes the following guidelines for developing questionnaires to ensure that the data collection instrument is valid and reliable by guaranteeing useful responses:

- i. Avoid a sloppy presentation by making the questionnaires attractive.
- ii. Carefully proofread the questionnaires before sending them out.
- iii. Avoid lengthy questionnaires.

The questionnaire may be administered personally or it may be emailed to the participants to save time and money on travel. For this study, the researcher administered the questionnaire herself, which was advantageous because the researcher was able to establish rapport, to explain the purpose of the study to the participants, and to explain the meaning of questions where it was unclear to them. To avoid cross-contamination of answers, teachers were not allowed to converse with one another during the process of completing the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of four main components as follows: demographic information of the Oshikwanyama L1 teachers; difficulties that teachers experience; challenges that hinder learners from understanding the reading content; and finally, possible solutions that Oshikwanyama L1 teachers explore to overcome the challenges.

3.5.2 Comprehension test

After the Oshikwanyama L1 teachers completed the questionnaires, the Oshikwanyama L1 learners wrote a comprehension test to assess their reading abilities, understanding and answering questions based on two related comprehension passages. Comprehension passages were given because learners can learn other reading skills such as to compare, contrast, and summarise.

3.5.3 Interview guide

An interview schedule or guide is a blueprint written to guide interviews (De Vos et al., 2011), and it consists of a set of questions that are asked and filled in by an interviewer in a face-to-face situation with the interviewee. This study employed the interview guide for learners (Appendix 3) and teachers (Appendix 4) as a tool for data collection because interviews are a predominant mode for data collection in qualitative research. This tool enabled the researcher to obtain information through the direct interchange with participants who have the knowledge regarding reading comprehension and the challenges that the Oshikwanyama L1 learners and teachers face.

De Vos, Strydom and Delport (2011) define an interview as a “method of gathering data by asking questions to get verbal reactions” (p. 342). De Vos et al. (2011) further explain that the purpose of interviews is to gain a “detailed explanation from the informers’ perception, opinions, and facts of the knowledge under study” (p. 242). This study aimed to solicit verbal reactions from the participant teachers and learners’ point of view and to gain detailed explanations from the informers’ perception, opinions, and facts of the knowledge under study.

Although the two types of interviews in qualitative research, structured and unstructured, are of equal importance, this study only used the structured interviews because the researcher had a specified set of questions that would elicit the same information from the participants. Thus, the researcher used a standardised open-ended interview approach, where the same open-ended questions were administered to Oshikwanyama L1 teachers (Appendix 4) and learners (Appendix 3).

In addition, corresponding interview guides with questionnaires were designed to obtain data from the Oshikwanyama L1 teachers and learners' perceptions and preferences with reasons for using reading comprehension texts. The instruction and wording of the items were suitable for each group of Oshikwanyama L1 participant teachers and learners. Open-ended questions were constructed to collect data, as it allows for detailed responses and elaboration on answers in ways that the interviewer may not have anticipated (De Vos et al., 2011, p. 343)

There were ten questions in the each of the interview guide for Oshikwanyama L1 teachers (Appendix 4) and learners (Appendix 3), and the interview sessions were audio recorded with an iPad to ensure that the data is available for data analysis (Bell, 2010).

3.5.4 Observation

Bell (2010) defines observation as the watching of behavioural pattern of people in certain situations to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest. The phenomenon of interest in this case is how the Oshikwanyama L1 teachers teach strategies that they can use to improve reading comprehension skill among learners. The classroom observation involved five classes and

took place during the 45 minutes period. The researcher was always a passive observer (Bell, 2010).

The researcher took note during the class observation, with the help of observation list she prepared for observation purposes, to help her with later analysis. (See Appendix 5) For example, when the teacher starts teaching the strategy, she ticked at the name of the teacher using the correct tick, or if the strategy is not taught she ticked using a cross. Although the teachers knew that the researcher was interested in reading comprehension, neither the lecturer nor learners knew what the researcher was looking for.

3.6 Procedure

Firstly, a letter was sent to the Postgraduate Study Committee to request for the ethical clearance letter. After the letter of ethical clearance letter was obtained, the Post Graduate Study Committee wrote a letter to the Director of the Khomas Region requesting for permission for the researcher to conduct the study at six selected schools in the Khomas Region. This permission was obtained from the Directorate of Education of Khomas Region (Appendix 10), and it enabled the researcher to proceed with the data collection.

The researcher then made calls to the school principals of the selected schools to inform them about the intention to conduct the study, thereby requesting permission to conduct the study in their school. After the verbal permission was granted, the researcher was prepared to visit the selected schools to begin with the data collection.

Upon arrival at each of the selected schools, the researcher met with the principal and presented him/her with the permission letter to prove that she was authorised by the Director of Education of the Khomas Region to conduct the study. In addition, the researcher elaborated the purpose of the study to the school principal. The researcher proceeded to meet the participants to brief them about the study, she then explained the purpose of the study, and then the procedures for the interview and observation, and the instructions for the questionnaires.

The researcher assured the participants of their right of participation, anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy. To ensure that this was adhered to, the researcher promised all the participants and their respective schools that pseudonyms would be used during the whole process. For confidentiality purposes, all documents and data collected were taken care of -- with a high degree of confidentiality by being kept in a locked drawer. Concerning privacy in the qualitative research, only the researcher has access to names and data.

The researcher distributed the questionnaires (Appendix 1) and left the six teachers with seven days to complete them. After the Oshikwanyama L1 teachers returned the questionnaires, 5 learners from each school wrote a reading comprehension test (Appendix 2) that was set by the researcher.

Thereafter, the researcher conducted a one-on-one audio-recorded interview with an iPad that was guided by the interview guide (Appendix 4) in a quiet place with each Oshikwanyama L1 teacher from the selected schools. Each interview lasted for about 30 minutes.

The researcher also had six focus group 20-minute interviews with the guidance of the interview guide (Appendix 3) with the five Oshikwanyama L1 learners from each of the selected schools and these were also audio recorded with an iPad to provide a verbatim account of the sessions (Bell, 2010).

Following the record taped data collection, the researcher transcribes the tape recording. Transcription is a written record of the events that were recorded (Gay, et al., 2011. p. 373).

3.7 Data analysis

Data were analysed by means of content analysis. According to Creswell (2010), content analysis is a method that “involves the comparing, contrasting, and categorising data in order to draw meaning” (p. 246). Data were organised according to the responses of the Oshikwanyama L1 teachers and responses from the learners. The data were analysed according to the main themes and sub-themes. The main themes were: teacher qualification and qualification; teaching methods and strategies for reading comprehension; challenges faced by teachers in reading comprehension; and possible solutions.

The subheadings were: insufficient time to answer the questions; difficult texts and terms; complicated figurative and parts of speech; lack of resources; poor learner reading skills; insufficient time to cover syllabus reading content; lack of background knowledge; and poor learner vocabulary. The subthemes under possible solutions were: improve teaching/learning strategies; improve/enhance reading skills/strategies; instil the reading culture; teach learners to

manage time; teach and enhance learners' vocabulary; and select appropriate authentic learning materials/texts.

3.8 Pilot study

To guarantee the validity of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted with two Oshikwanyama L1 teachers from the Khomas Region. The teachers who participated in the pilot study did not participate in the main study. The main aim of the pilot study was to determine the extent that the data collection instruments would solicit the type of data anticipated by the researcher, whether the type of data collected could be meaningfully analysed in accordance with the research questions, whether the language used was appropriate and formal, and finally, to determine whether participants would understand the questions and instructions in the questionnaire.

Questionnaires were administered to the two teachers to ensure that the questionnaires were correctly compiled. The researcher allowed for feedback by allowing the teachers to indicate the questions or terms they did not understand, and by allowing for suggestions and comments for positive criticism. The pilot study was helpful, as it allowed for slight modifications to be made to the questions of the questionnaires.

3.9 Research ethics

The researcher was granted permission by the Directorate of Education for Khomas Region, and an ethical clearance certificate was also obtained. Participation was voluntary, and participants were liberal to withdraw from the study at any stage of the study without any consequences. All information obtained from the participants was used for the study, and it was treated with

confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher assured the participants of their right of participation, anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy. To ensure that this was adhered to, the researcher promised all the participants and their respective schools that pseudonyms would be used during the whole process. The researcher further explained that pseudonyms means that their identity would not be revealed, and that would remain unknown. Bell (2011) states that information about participants must be regarded as confidential, unless otherwise agreed through informed consent. For confidentiality purposes, all documents and data collected were taken care of with a high degree of confidentiality, meaning that they were kept in a locked drawer (De Vos et al, 2011).

Concerning privacy in the qualitative research, only the researcher has access to names and data. Privacy also means the data collected are kept out of the public eye (De Vos et al, 2011). All participants were assured that they would receive the draft of the report for validation and were invited to provide correction if necessary and ensure that details were accurately and recorded and reported.

3.10 Conclusion

Chapter 3 described the research methodology that was used to collect and analyse data. It explained the research design, population, sample for data collection, research instruments and procedures to collect data, and the method for data analysis. Chapter 4 presents an analysis and discussion of the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

To determine the challenges that Oshikwanyama First Language teachers face when implementing reading comprehension skills at the six selected schools in the Khomas Region, the study focused on the main factors that hinder the successful implementation of reading comprehension in the Khomas Region.

This chapter comprises two main components for data analysis, namely: the teacher as a factor that hinders the implementation of reading comprehension; and the learner as a factor that hinders the implementation of reading comprehension in the classroom. The study was based on the following research questions: Which teaching strategies do Oshikwanyama L1 teachers use for reading comprehension? What are the challenges faced by Oshikwanyama L1 learners in reading comprehension? What are the challenges faced by Oshikwanyama L1 teachers when teaching reading comprehension? and finally, what are the possible solutions to improve the Oshikwanyama L1 reading comprehension? These research questions were used to draw up the themes to explore learners and teachers as contributors to the challenges of implementing reading comprehension in the Khomas Region. The Schema theory explains strategies to teach reading comprehension with the facilitation of an expert teacher; therefore, it was relevant for the study, as it was the guiding tool and base for assessing the reading comprehension situation for Oshikwanyama L1 teachers and learners. The phenomenology design was appropriate for the study because the study is

interpretative in nature; it sought to understand the phenomenon from the participants' viewpoint, rather than proving or providing statistical data.

Moreover, the study employed the qualitative research approach because it explored the challenges that Oshikwanyama L1 teachers and learners during the teaching of reading comprehension lessons in their natural setting, which is the classroom. Furthermore, the researcher collected data using questionnaires, reading comprehension text as a test for learners, and the observation and interviews with the Oshikwanyama L1 teachers and learners. The researcher analysed data by identifying patterns from the entire data source, which were themes that were mainly influenced by four main research questions.

4.2 Teacher qualification and experience

Teacher qualification and experience play a role in any subject and skill. It is for this reason that the researcher was intrigued to investigate whether teachers are well trained and experienced because it would be impossible for them to instil skills that they lack or do not understand well themselves.

Using a questionnaire (Appendix 1), the researcher was able to compile the profiles of the six teacher participants to determine their level of qualification. The study found that four of the teacher participants are qualified specialised Oshikwanyama teachers, one is a qualified teacher but in commerce subjects and not Oshikwanyama, whereas the other teacher is underqualified with a qualification in Education Certificate Primary (ECP).

The issue of underqualified teachers or qualified teachers who did not specialise in the specific subject that they teach is often overlooked, but it is a common problem, especially in Namibia due to reasons such as the shortage of teachers. In the case of Shimbungu Secondary School, it is due to overstaffing or the lack of appropriate allocation of human resources. This claim is supported byimba, Mufume, Likando and Febraury (2013), who confirm that most Namibian teachers do not have teaching qualifications for the subject they teach. As was found by this study, Kalola is not a specialised Oshikwanyama teacher, but he teaches Oshikwanyama F1, because the school (Shimbungu Secondary School) was over-staffed, and as a result, Kalola, the only Oshiwambo speaking teacher at the school, opted to fill in the post for Oshikwanyama L1 instead of being transferred to another school. He has over four years of teaching experience in Oshikwanyama L1.

Teacher qualification and experience are usually linked to performance but qualifications are not the only contributing factor as is the case in this study where even the learners whose teachers are qualified and specialised in Oshikwanyama L1 teaching, learners did not perform well in the test (Chart 1). Overall, all the learners from the participating schools performed poorly. This situation is not surprising because there are other factors that affect poor reading comprehension and performance in general. These factors are both teacher and learner related.

4.3 Teaching methods and strategies for reading comprehension

Based on Wessels (2010) argue that to teach reading comprehension, there are strategies and principles that should be taken into consideration. These strategies and principles formed a basis for observation and they were used to draw up the observation checklist for the teaching methods and strategies for reading comprehension.

The researcher was mainly concerned about how well the Oshikwanyama L1 teachers develop the theoretical and practical understanding of reading comprehension. To investigate the strategies or methods that the Oshikwanyama L1 teachers use vis-à-vis the principle of understanding reading comprehension, the teachers were observed during 12 lessons with the guidance of an observation checklist (Appendix 5). The main basis for this observation was to determine the methods and strategies that Oshikwanyama L1 teachers use to teach reading comprehension, thereby answering the research question.

Based on Wessels (2011) model of teaching strategies, the researcher developed an observation checklist to determine the strategies that teachers mostly use for reading comprehension. These strategies are: asking questions, building on prior learning, vocabulary enhancement, summarising, modelling, dialogue, prediction, explanation, and visual materials. The findings of the observation are presented in Table 1 below:

| Strategy | Tuli | Ndaenda | Rutty | Elly | Kalola | Tangi |
|----------------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| Asking questions | ✓ | ✓ | X | X | ✓ | ✓ |
| Building on prior learning | ✓ | X | X | ✓ | X | X |
| Vocabulary enhancement | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | X | X |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Summarising | ✓ | X | X | X | X | ✓ |
| Modelling | ✓ | X | X | X | X | X |
| Explaining | ✓ | ✓ | X | X | ✓ | ✓ |
| Dialogue | ✓ | X | X | X | X | X |
| Prediction | ✓ | X | X | X | X | X |

Table 1: Teaching strategies/methods

The tick indicates that the method was used by the teachers during the lesson; whereas the cross indicates that the strategy or method was not used during the lesson as observed.

As indicated in the table above, the study found that asking questions, explanation, and vocabulary enhancement are the mostly used strategies and methods to teach Oshikwanyama; building on prior learning, and summarising are only used by two participants, whereas modelling, dialogue, and prediction are the least used strategies and methods.

Using the table (Table 1), the researcher ranked asking questions, building on prior knowledge, prediction, and summarising as the most important strategies, most teacher participants (4) commonly used vocabulary and explanation. Unsurprisingly, modelling, dialogue, and visual materials were the least used.

Sanker and Cockrm (2009) argue that strategies and methods are some of the factors that are linked to performance because the teaching style defines the approach that teachers use to teach a certain skill. This means that if teachers do not employ the correct strategies and methods, or if they do not employ the methods and strategies correctly, the academic skills will not be effectively passed on; hence, the teaching and learning goals will not be successful.

By classifying highly important strategies and methods, those that are commonly used, and the least used methods and strategies, the researcher was able to determine whether the strategies and methods were one of the hindrances to effective implementation of reading comprehension.

The study found that among the important strategies and methods, asking questions were the commonly used because four out of six participants were observed to use the strategies often. Asking questions is an important strategy because it enables learners to become “active and adventurous thinkers because if children identify what they want to know by asking questions, they are more likely to value and remember the answer” (Gabby, 2016, p.79). Thus, it is commendable that teacher participants can ask questions, and especially because they asked the recommended questions that require high order thinking, thoughtful response, and those that make the mind buzz (Gabby, 2016).

On the contrary, two participant teachers did not ask challenging questions; they primarily focused on closed-ended questions that are not mentally stimulating; they are lowly cognitively demanding, as they did not require learners to persist in their thinking and learning (Gabby, 2016). It was

apparent that nature and quality of questions that teachers play a crucial role in the implementation of academic skills, and in the case of this study – reading comprehension skills.

The researcher further observed that most teachers (Tuli, Kalola and Ndaenda) ask too many questions in one lesson. Kalola was observed as the teacher who asks the most questions, as he was recorded to have asked 33 questions within 45 minutes. The study further revealed that some learners paid little or no attention to the teachers' questions; they were seemingly bored or exhausted by the number questions, and by the pattern and frequency of asking questions. Spohn (2001) caution teachers to “ask few but better questions” (p. 13).

In addition to the method or strategy of asking questions, building on prior knowledge, summarising, and prediction are equally of important; however, they were the least used by the Oshikwanyama L1, and this hinders the performance of learners. Furthermore, the researcher observed that modelling, dialogue, and using visual materials were the least used strategies because, as indicated in Table 1, only one teacher participant used them during the observation.

The consequences of not using the strategy or method to build on prior knowledge is that learners are likely to divorce the learning content from their experiences, and they may not be able to comprehend the passage given to them. Wessels (2010) asserts that building to prior knowledge helps learners to connect existing knowledge to new knowledge. This means that the four out of six participant teachers as representatives who do not use this strategy deprive learners the benefit to relate knowledge to experiences. Thus, the lack of using the method or strategy to build on prior

knowledge has consequences on the performance of learners; or, in the context of this, on the implementation of the reading comprehension.

In addition to building on prior knowledge, summarising is a crucial strategy or method to teaching, and especially to teach reading comprehension. This strategy plays an important role in secondary school teaching, as it provides learners with the ability to condense information to save time when summarising important information, and to follow instructions. Summarising is both a skill and a teaching method, and it forms the spine of reading comprehension.

The Oshikwanyama syllabus clearly stipulates that Grade 10-12 learners should be able to summarise information given to them especially from two related passages; therefore, if teachers do not use this method or strategy to teach it as a skill, learners will not be able to meet all the standards of the syllabus, thereby affecting their overall performance in the national exams.

The six teachers were observed in the 12 lessons in order to determine whether they use the strategy of summarising when teaching reading comprehension. As shown in Table 1/2, the study found that only a total of two teachers use the strategy of summarising in their lessons, whereas the rest of the four participants do not use the method or rather did not use the method during the observation session.

The researcher further observed that the teacher participants who were praised for using the summarising method or strategy did not use it effectively. The teachers had shortcomings such as not giving clear instructions in the reading comprehension passages, inappropriate length of

passages, and insufficient graded practical activities for summarising. It is on the basis of these findings that the researcher argues that the teachers who incorrectly use any method or strategy is as equally contributing to the consequences of implementation as the one who does not employ the strategies or methods at all.

The study found that factors such as overcrowded classrooms affect the effective use of strategies such as summarising when learners are unable to complete the tasks on their own, especially if the instructions are not clear, because the teacher will not be able to go around the class to attend to every learner. This challenge could be tackled if teachers provide concise and perspicuous instructions to completing a task, so that learners do not face the dilemma to be clueless in class. Furthermore, teachers could allocate students in groups or pairs, so that strong and weak learners can complement one another.

Regarding the strategies and methods to teach reading comprehension, the researcher found that the problem lies mostly in the overuse of one or certain methods, which makes the teaching style rigid that learners lose interest as they are bored with the routine. Furthermore, teachers often recycle the same comprehension texts that do not fit certain strategies and methods to successfully implement reading comprehension. Teachers ought to use authentic material that best suit the lifestyle and background of the learners – which they are more likely to be interested in, because children and teenagers learn better from fun materials or exciting environments.

Although it is not the least important, prediction is the last strategy or method of discussion in this section of the chapter. As previously mentioned, the strategy is classified as one of those that are

highly important, yet it was least employed by teachers as observed in the study. Prediction is one of the important teaching strategy or method, and it may also be classified as a skill. Imagination plays a key role in the learning and information processing of learners because children, including those who are at the adolescent stage, are creative and playful being. This understanding helps teachers to take the advantage of using the method of prediction as a strategy to stimulate the reading comprehension of learners; the strategy requires learner to make the best guess based on their background knowledge (Reutel & Cooter, 2012). When learners are actively involved in the reading comprehension learning process, especially in thought (imagination), they are likely to create a mental image of story for a given passage.

Six teachers were observed during 12 lessons for the researcher to determine whether they use the strategy or method of prediction to teach reading comprehension. The study found that only one teacher participant used the prediction strategy of prediction during observation.

However, as it was the case with the summarising strategy, the method was entirely not effectively employed due to insufficient resources. The teacher was unable to provide enough texts for every learner to read and practise; thus, some learners had to share the text with other learners or among themselves. Even though this pair or group work is recommended for the benefit of peer learning or repeating a text in group, it is equally disadvantageous because the learners who did not receive a text will not be able to revise at home during self-study, or when necessary, such as before the exams.

Moreover, the lack of resources was also attributed to the inability to employ the strategy because facilities such as the internet and teaching aids prevent the teacher from helping the learners to acquire the ability to predict outcomes by showing them a series of pictures from a story.

Furthermore, the lack of general or prior knowledge was observed as a challenge that hinder the effective use of the prediction teaching method or strategy. Without background knowledge, learners are unable to foretell or guess the beginning or ending of the story. The lack of general or prior knowledge is also attributed to the lack of motivation because there will be no curiosity and the urge to settle the argument in a story, which usually motivates learners to read further to develop internal motivation.

Background or prior knowledge is an important aspect in this study of the factors that affect the implementation of reading comprehension, and it is also supported by the lens of the study - the Schema theory.

4.4 Challenges faced by learners in reading comprehension

To investigate the challenges that learners face in reading comprehension, the researcher compiled a comprehension test (Appendix 2) and interview focus groups (Appendix 3). A total of 30 learners from the six different schools were purposively selected to participate in the study based on: best performing, average performing, and poorly performing. This sample and data collection is broken down as follows: in the comprehension test, 30 learners from six schools wrote the comprehension test (Appendix 2) where they were required to read two passages in Oshikwanyama, and then answer comprehension questions based on the passages. The purpose of the test was to find out

how well Oshikwanyama L1 learners understand a written text, and to determine the difficulties they encounter.

For the interview focus group as guided by the interview guide (Appendix 3), the same learners who participated in the comprehension test were interviewed in a group of five learners as per the participating school. The data from the interview will be discussed in the other sections separately. This section will focus on the findings from the comprehension test.

The comprehension test (Appendix 2) was out of 20 marks, and it required learners to demonstrate their ability to compare information from two related passages as a reflection of their reading comprehension. Learners were asked to read the two related passages about two trees, *omukanga* and *omukuku*, and then provide the advantages of the local usage of the two trees. The learners' level of comprehension was assessed based on their ability to infer knowledge, to employ background or prior knowledge, their vocabulary, their ability to summarise, and their skills to infer. These skills were necessary because if the learners lack them, then it will be impossible to effectively implement reading comprehension.

The results from the comprehension test (Chart 1) show that most learners (87%) performed poorly in the test, as most of them failed to compare the information from the two passages. Reasoning and critical thinking skills are attributed to general and prior knowledge, as well as the Schema theory. Thus, the researcher concluded that the results from the comprehension test reflect the lack of the previously discussed skills are contributing factors to the effective implementation of reading comprehension. As a result, learners do not develop critical thinking and reasoning skills,

thereby affecting their overall performance in national exams. Chart 1 below presents the results from the comprehension test, classified according to the percentage of learners who scored below average, and those who scored above average in the test.

Comprehension test results

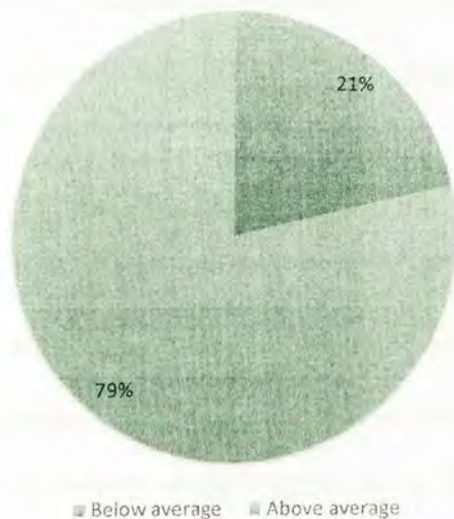


Chart 1: Comprehension test results

Table Chart 1 on Comprehension test results, shows that of the 30 learners who participated in the study, a majority (87%) did not score above average, except 13% who scored above 10% in the comprehension test. The results from the test reflect that learners failed to demonstrate the skills that are required for reading comprehension, which is one of the challenges that learners face because they cannot apply the skills that they do not have. The challenges, based on the comprehension test and the interview focus groups, are: insufficient time to answer questions, difficult texts, and the lack of resources such as a library and textbooks, and the use of complicated

figurative language and parts of the speech. These challenges will be discussed in the sections to follow.

4.4.1 Insufficient time to answer the questions

Learners at Kavandje Secondary School voiced out the concern that “*There is not enough time to finish answering this question within forty-five minutes of a lesson*”. Similarly, another focus group at Ndingili Secondary School complained about the lengthy passages that are given to them, saying that:

“The passages are long, it is almost three pages long, the time is only 45 minutes.”

Based on the interview focus groups and comprehension test, the study found that the time allocated to learners to answer reading comprehension is either too little, that learners did not develop a pace and reading strategy, or that learners do not know how to manage their time, because they did not manage to complete the comprehension test on time.

It is therefore evident that insufficient time and lengthy passages are some of the factors that hinder the successful implementation of reading comprehension. However, Oshikwanyama L1 teachers countered that the syllabus already dictates that the length of the passage should be two and half pages long. Oshikwanyama L1 teachers also added that the time to answer the questions is always 45 minutes. However, this challenge could be alleviated if learners are taught to manage their time effectively, if they are taught the different reading techniques so that they do not spend too much time studying a text that requires scanning or skimming for instance, and finally if teachers ensure that they select texts of the appropriate length for learners to be able to finish on time.

4.4.2 Difficult texts or terms

In addition to insufficient time to complete reading comprehension tasks, difficult texts and terms were also found to be factors that affect the implementation of reading comprehension. One learner complained that:

“When I am reading, I come across difficult terms and difficult words. By the time I finish the first passage I am totally lost, forgetting what I am expected to do. It is really difficult, and the instruction is vague”.

This factor is related to insufficient time, or it rather contributes to the factor of insufficient time because when the texts are difficult to comprehend, or they are of an unrelated topic, and/or consists of many difficult terms, learners are likely to spend more time on the passage to try to understand it before they can answer the questions.

Learners from the focus groups expressed that they did not often understand some terms from texts, as the passages usually consist of difficult or archaic words that they are unable to relate to. This finding was not surprising to the researcher because Oshikwanyama L1 learners in the Khomas Region are often referred to as urbanites, whose lifestyle is often characterised by the contemporary lifestyle; therefore, it is quite expected that they might be unable to identify with certain concepts and terms of their own Oshikwanyama culture.

4.4.3 Figurative and parts of speech

In addition to difficult or archaic words, learners who participated in the focus groups identified idioms, and figurative language or figures of speech as aspects that complicate texts. They stated that:

“Teachers used difficult words, figurative and part of speech which complicate the whole reading with clear understanding. Most of the passages are boring” (sic).

This challenge can be tackled if learners broaden their general knowledge, which is only possible if they develop a reading culture. A reading culture will expose them to the various idioms, figures of speech, figurative expressions, and archaic words that they struggle with. On the side of the teachers, they could use as many vocabulary enhancement activities as possible. The researcher also suggests using orator and other traditional methods to teach Oshikwanyama could help learners to broaden their understanding. Teachers should set up the passages that match the age of the learners and considered the interest of the learners and current trends in the world.

The researcher came to a realisation that parents are probably not involved in their children’s learning because challenges of difficult or different texts and terms can be tackled if parents are involved in their children’s learning, by speaking correct Oshikwanyama L1 at home. Parents are useful resources or sources of information because they can help learners with their homework, to help them to revise, and to teach them Oshikwanyama language and culture.

4.4.4 Lack of resources

Resources play a significant role in the teaching and learning process, and especially in language learning. The researcher sought to investigate whether schools were equipped with the libraries and resources, which play an important role in the development of reading comprehension. The interviews between teachers and learners reveal that all the participating schools are not equipped with appropriate libraries and resources. One learner from the focus groups said:

“Although there is a big library at our school, there are no books in Oshikwanyama or in Oshiwambo. There are no dictionaries in the library, but there are dictionaries in the bookshops, but the government does not buy us dictionaries.”

Schools that are equipped with standard libraries can help teachers to instil the reading culture in learners. Furthermore, the school libraries will enable teachers to learn about various teaching theories that can help them to develop and improve teaching strategies and methods.

From the responses of the teachers in the interview (Appendix 4), the researcher came to the conclusion, that most teachers revealed an attitude of dependency on the Ministry of education to provide them with all the information and materials. This attitude is evident when one of the participants said:

“The people from the ministry do not even come to the school to provide us with the required information such as information to improve the results, the materials are delivered very late or not at all.”

This is a wrong attitude because a good teacher is said to be a good learner, so it is the responsibility of the teachers to constantly seek knowledge to improve their teaching. The learners also revealed that printed materials about the local culture, language, and surroundings were hard to find. One of the focus group participants at Shimbungu Secondary School explained that: *“Most of the available materials are mostly in Afrikaans and English”*.

However, two other participants explained that their teacher *“often exposed them to newspapers such as The Namibian, Kundana, and The Namibian newspaper, but they are poorly written in local languages and only write about local news and do not have new vocabulary”*.

The findings reveal that teachers do not expose learners to reading materials in Oshikwanyama materials as indicated by both teachers and learners. The lack of materials or resources in Oshikwanyama can be linked to have an influence on the reading culture of the learners. The results of the lack of materials in Oshikwanyama lead to a lack of interest and self-confidence from learners. Still, teachers cannot use the lack of the materials as an excuse not to improve the current situation.

4.5 Challenges faced by teachers in reading comprehension

4.5.1 Poor learner reading skills

Responding to the questionnaires of the problems experienced when teaching reading comprehension, six (6) Oshikwanyama teachers indicated that some of their learners face serious reading challenges, making it obvious that teachers must classify learners as poor and good

readers. The teacher participants further explained that the first language subject comprises of the following components, namely: Continuous Writing, Reading and Directed Writing, Listening, Speaking, and Literature. All teacher participants expressed their concern insufficient period to teach all language components, which is one of the challenge they face when teaching. All Oshikwanyama L1 teachers participated in the study expressed that: *“The language policy only allocated six periods of forty minutes per circle, or five periods per week”*.

This means that a teacher only sees learners once a week for each component. This lack of sufficient time puts a restraint on what teachers teach, as components are covered in a hurry, resulting in some learners not clearly grasping an understanding of what they are learning. Teachers mentioned that decoding and reading comprehension is an issue of concern. According to Ruddy:

“The biggest challenge is to make learners understand that there is a difference between decoding and reading with comprehension, which is something that they think they know. She also added that decoding is just to read, whereas reading comprehension is to read with understanding.

On the other hand, Kalola explained:

“I found it difficult to convince the learners that reading is a process that need includes vocabulary, syntax words such as conjunctions. It is difficult to teach the said process, because of large classes. It is difficult to walk around and see what is happening with each learner.

It is interesting to note that Tangi did not only have trouble in assessing large classes but also that of group work, as she stated:

“Some learners tend to dominate others when in groups and some do not contribute to the group work.”

4.5.2 Insufficient time to cover syllabus content

In addition, Ndaenda complained that: *“The timetable is always full, as we also teach other subjects and we are required to participate in various school committee”*. Elly added that: *“I am the only teacher who teaches the Oshikwanyama Language subject at our school across the grades: grade 8-12, and “some learners do not want to do things on their own; they wait for others or the teacher, to finish and then copy from them”*. Oshikwanyama L1 teachers said the above stated situation places a limitation on the reading comprehension.

4.5.3 Lack of background knowledge

Another problem that the teacher participants expressed is the lack of background knowledge and experience that learners are required to have to understand reading comprehension. Oshikwanyama L1 teachers expressed the understanding that: *“Background knowledge helps learners to connect the previous knowledge to the current knowledge; without it, learners struggle to read in-depth and with understanding*. Background knowledge may include the knowledge about the culture and tradition of a specific tribe. Oshikwanyama L1 learners would benefit from background knowledge by helping them to understand and relate to a passage in reading comprehension.

The other problem experienced by the six teacher participants when teaching reading comprehension, according to Kalola, is the fact that: *“Learners are not always aware of their lack*

of understanding, and even when they are aware, they do not know what strategy is available for them to use”.

Kalola argued that this lack of awareness creates a limitation on the type of possible answers. He further indicated that: *“some learners do not comply with reading instruction; therefore, I decided to allocate one mark for reading instruction correctly”.*

In addition, Ndaenda stated that: *“Good readers sometimes stop to verify their understanding of the text, while poor readers do not stop to monitor their reading; they read on without understanding what they are reading”.* This is a result of a lack of libraries and written books in Oshikwanyama although there is a textbook available.

4.5.4 Poor vocabulary and lack of background knowledge

Elly’s biggest difficulty is to teach vocabulary, stating that:

“It is difficult to teach vocabulary, as there are many words in a given language. There are 90 000 words in Oshikwanyama let alone in Oshiwambo. Even if you teach learners some words, each time learners come across a new passage, they are bound to come across new words.”

Background knowledge and experience that the learners brought to the passage support good reading and comprehension. Tangi explained by adding that *“many of learners in Khomas Region are either born in this region or they moved with their parents here when they were young. Most of them are not exposed to Oshikwanyama culture and most of the text used in high schools write about experiences that are common for middle-class Oshikwanyama speaking learners”.* This

means that learners in the Khomas Region are likely to lack the background necessary for them to understand certain texts because they are not exposed to the cultural and traditional practices.

4.6 Possible solutions

These solutions are suggestions to teachers and learners for the goals of reading comprehension to be achieved. The possible solutions include: improving the teaching and learning strategies, enhancing the reading skills and strategies, instilling the reading culture, teaching learners to manage their time, teaching and enhancing learners' vocabulary, and selecting appropriate and authentic materials that are available. These will be explained in detail in the sections to follow.

4.6.1 Improve teaching and learning strategies

Based on the findings of the study, teachers sometimes either use rigid teaching methods and strategies or they overuse them. The common teaching methods and strategies are: asking questions, building on prior learning, vocabulary enhancement, summarising, modelling, dialogue, prediction, explanation, and using visual materials. These methods should be used depending on the nature of the lesson, as well as the desired learning outcomes because in most cases, these strategies reflect the skills and outcomes. For instance, the method of summarising may also be perceived as a skill because when learners are taught through this method, they will automatically be taught the skills to summarise.

Even though all the methods are important and recommended, the strategies of asking questions, building on prior knowledge, summarising, and prediction are considered as highly important strategies/skills. Teachers should, therefore, pay attention to these highly important skills so that

learners are not disadvantaged. Furthermore, teachers should use a variety of methods as creatively as possible.

4.6.2 Improve or enhance reading skills and strategies

The study revealed that most learners lack basic reading skills or strategies that are required for reading comprehension. Reading skills, especially the basic reading ones such as to identify words, are instilled in the primary stages of the child's life, but some learners lack the required foundation that they struggle to meet or achieve the standards in high school. Teachers should, therefore, ensure that learners are on the same pace in class so that both slow and fast learners' (good and poor readers) needs are met.

Reading skills are not only determined by the ability to identify words, phrases, and paragraphs, but also through the ability to apply the appropriate strategies when required. Learners should be taught how to apply the appropriate techniques to especially manage time, which was considered a challenge in reading comprehension. Depending on the required task, learners should be able to apply passive or active reading, whereby they will use either skimming or scanning to look for the required information to answer the questions.

4.6.3 Instil the reading culture

There are many benefits to reading for pleasure, but most children are not brought up in a way that they make reading a habit. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the teachers to create tasks for children to read as much as possible. For instance, teachers could come up with a strategy for holiday readers, where they recommend a certain book for learners to read during the holiday, and then set a graded test or assignment that is based on the book. This strategy will leave learners with

no choice but to read the recommended text or texts; otherwise, they will not be able to pass the test or assignment.

In addition, teachers can test learners' general knowledge constantly, so that they will be forced to stay informed of the latest news, for instance. In this case, learners can use available resources such as The Namibian newspaper section for news in Oshiwambo, and other newspapers such as Kundana.

Lastly, teachers can use the opportunity to instil the reading culture through creative writing. If teachers ask learners to write creative stories or poems and then ask other learners to critique or peer mark, learners will be more interested to read the work of others, and this will also lessen the work of the teachers – saving them from the marking load. This exercise is also important because learners will learn the critical skills, and they will understand the assessment process, thereby teaching them what is expected of them; hence, improving the quality of their work.

4.6.4 Teach learners to manage time

The study found that time is a challenge to learners and teachers in different ways. Teachers are challenged in that they are sometimes unable to cover everything in a 45-minute lesson, they struggle to cover the whole syllabus given the extra responsibilities such as administrative work.

In the case of the learners, they complained that they are unable to answer all the questions within the allocated time for exams or a test. The possible solution is that both teachers and learners

4.6.6 Select appropriate, authentic learning materials/texts

Teachers should meet the learners halfway by ensuring that they select materials or texts that are suitable for the learners. Materials are suitable when they are age appropriate and when learners can relate to them. When teachers use the appropriate texts, learners are more likely to be interested in the story and are to comprehend it – hence their motivation is increased.

In addition, teachers are advised to use authentic materials that learners are likely to encounter in their daily lives. Learning should not be too divorced from everyday life, so authentic materials such as newspapers, magazines, and artefacts are highly recommended.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented and analysed the data based on the research questions. Data were collected using questionnaires, a reading comprehension test that was given to learners, interview sessions with teachers and learners with the aid of an interview guide, and through observation that was guided by the observation checklist. The data were analysed in themes that were drawn from the main research questions. Finally, the chapter discussed the possible solutions to alleviate the challenges of reading comprehension. Chapter 5 presents the summary, conclusions, and the recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study sought to investigate the challenges that Oshikwanyama First Language teachers face when implementing reading comprehension skills at six selected schools in the Khomas Region. The study only focused on reading comprehension, which is the main reason that Grade 12 learners generally perform poorly in Oshikwanyama L1 because they fail to demonstrate the reading competence in the Reading and Directed Writing component that deals with reading comprehension passages. Although Oshikwanyama L1 learners struggle in many areas of language, the study only focused on reading comprehension. Paper 1 of the Oshikwanyama L1 examinations does not only require learners to demonstrate knowledge and comprehension, but it also assesses the application, synthesis, and an argumentative understanding of the given passages (NIED, 2010).

The study was based on the following research questions:

- 1.3.1 Which teaching strategies do Oshikwanyama L1 teachers use for reading comprehension?
- 1.3.2 What are the challenges faced by Oshikwanyama L1 learners in reading comprehension passages?
- 1.3.3 What are the challenges faced by Oshikwanyama L1 teachers in reading comprehension?
- 1.3.4 What are the possible solutions to improve the Oshikwanyama L1 reading comprehension skills?

Data were presented according to the following themes that were drawn from the research questions:

- a. Teacher qualification and experience
- b. Teaching methods and strategies for reading comprehension
- c. Challenges faced by learners in reading comprehension
- d. Challenges faced teachers in reading comprehension
- e. Possible solutions

The study used the phenomenological, qualitative approach. The approach was appropriate for the study because it minimised bias, simultaneously maximising the reliability of data (Babie & Mouton, 2009). Furthermore, the approach provides a unique example of real people in a real situation, which enabled the researcher to understand ideas more clearly, rather than simply presenting building theories. The qualitative approach was appropriate for the study because it was concerned with investigating the challenges that Oshikwanyama L1 teachers face when teaching reading comprehension in their natural setting.

The findings of the study can not be generalised to other educational regions because it was only based on a few selected schools in the Khomas Region. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2013) assert that “it is a basic view of a qualitative inquiry to seek a deep understanding of a phenomenon, rather than presenting them with statistical generalisations” (p. 8). This study did not rely on statistical procedures and generalisations, but it focused on organising data into patterns to produce a descriptive narrative synthesis.

In order to retain the voices of the participants, the researcher included direct quotations from Oshikwanyama L1 teachers and learners where they highlighted as particulars of importance. To practice what Babie and Mouton (2009) refer to as a 'sense of being there', the researcher recorded data from interviews and questionnaires as instruments for data collection. The interview protocols and questionnaire guides contained semi-structured and open-ended questions based on the challenges that Oshikwanyama L1 teachers face when teaching reading comprehension to answer questions of the study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2011).

The target population of this study was all the Grade 12 Oshikwanyama L1 teachers and learners in the Khomas Region. A total of six Oshikwanyama L1 teachers were selected on the basis of extensive experience in teaching Oshikwanyama L1 and serve as markers for the Oshikwanyama L1 national examinations. The sample size was based on the idea that a minimal number of participants will generate an in-depth data, providing a detailed insight of the situation being investigated (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). This sampling method was done in order to create a sample that is relevant to the research questions or the main objectives of the study, which Bell (2010) refer to as an "information rich" (p. 45) sample, and which Best and Khan (2009) characterise as a "purposive sample" (p. 412). A total of thirty learners were purposively sampled for the study.

In addition to the purposive sampling that was employed to select teacher and learner participants, the researcher selected the schools using the convenience sampling procedure. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2011) define convenience sampling as a "group of people, events, and subjects selected on the basis of being accessible and representative" (p. 134).

To maintain confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity, teachers and sampled schools were given the pseudonyms as follows: Kola Senior Secondary School - teacher Tuli; Kakodi Senior Secondary School – teacher Ndaenda; Ndingili Senior Secondary School – teacher Elly; Ndjaba Senior Secondary School – Ruty; Kavandje Senior Secondary School – teacher Tangi; and Shimbungu Senior Secondary School - Kalola.

The study was centred on the *Schema* Theory, which served as the main framework for the qualitative data analysis. The theory signifies that there is no text that reveals a complete meaning, but it instead provides direction for the audience to build up or form meaning from previously acquired knowledge. Knowledge schemata are classified as follows: knowledge of the world and its conventions; knowledge about the way different types of texts are organised; and knowledge about the context.

The *Schema* Theory was especially useful in interpreting the challenges of reading comprehension from the learners' perspective because it is easy to draw conclusions from the formula of the knowledge schemata that if learners do not have knowledge of the world and its conventions, about the way different types of texts are organised, and about the context, then comprehension will be impossible to take place.

From the perspective of the teacher, and therefore the challenges that teachers face when implementing reading comprehension, the theory is appropriate and effective for the study because it posits that the role of the teacher is to provide appropriate challenges and support for learners by

(1) using learners' existing knowledge as a starting point, (2) encouraging learners natural curiosity to learn by way of challenging tasks, (3) appreciating the perspective of learners, and (4) involving learners as partners in, rather than receivers of, educational growth (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Thus, the theory is appropriate as a guideline and framework for investing the challenges in reading comprehension for both the teachers and learners.

5.2 Conclusion

The study revealed that not all Oshikwanyama L1 teachers are qualified to teach the subject/language and that they do not employ sufficient teaching strategies and methods to teach reading comprehension. Teachers are challenged by the fact that: learners have poor basic reading skills in Oshikwanyama; there is insufficient time to cover the syllabus; learners have a poor vocabulary and learners often lack background knowledge. Furthermore, the study revealed that learners face the following challenges: they have insufficient time to answer reading comprehension questions; some passages consist of difficult texts and terms; unfamiliar use of figurative language and parts of speech; and the lack of resources. Finally, in terms of possible solutions, teachers and learners suggested: improving teaching and learning strategies; improving and enhancing reading skills and strategies; instilling the reading culture; teaching learners to manage time; and finally, teaching and enhancing learners' vocabulary. These conclusions of the findings will be discussed in detail in the following sections, according to themes of the data analysis and presentation, and parallel to the research questions.

5.2.1 Teacher qualification and experience

The study found that out of the six teachers who participated in the study, four are qualified, specialised Oshikwanyama teachers; one is a qualified teacher but in Commerce subjects – not Oshikwanyama, whereas one is underqualified with a qualification in Education Certificate Primary (ECP).

5.2.2 Teaching methods and strategies for reading comprehension

The study found that strategies such as asking questions, explanation, and vocabulary enhancement are the commonly used strategies and methods to teach Oshikwanyama L1. Building on prior learning, and summarising are only used by two participants, whereas modelling, dialogue, and prediction are the least used strategies and methods.

The researcher ranked asking questions, building on prior knowledge, prediction, and summarising as the most important strategies, but from the observation of teachers, the researcher found that most teacher participants (4) commonly use vocabulary and explanation. Unsurprisingly, modelling, dialogue, and visual materials are the least used.

The study found that among the highly important strategies and methods, asking questions is the commonly used because four out of six participants were often observed using the strategy. Asking questions is an important strategy because it enables learners to become “active and adventurous thinkers; if children identify what they want to know by asking questions, they are more likely to value and remember the answer” (Gabby, 2016, p.79).

The teacher participants are highly commended on their ability to ask questions, especially their ability to ask recommended questions that require high order thinking, thoughtful response, and those that “make the mind buzz” (Gabby, 2016). On the contrary, two participant teachers did not ask challenging questions; they primarily focused on closed-ended questions that are not mentally stimulating; they are not very cognitively demanding, as they do not require learners to persist in their thinking and learning (Gabby, 2016). Thus, the nature and quality of questions that teachers ask to play a crucial role in the implementation of academic skills, and in the case of this study – reading comprehension skills.

The researcher further observed that most teachers (Tuli, Kalola and Ndaenda) ask too many questions in one lesson. Kalola was observed as the teacher who asks the most questions, as he was recorded to have asked 33 questions within 45 minutes. The study further found that some learners paid little or no attention to the teachers’ questions; they were seemingly bored or exhausted by the number of questions. Thus, Spohn (2001) caution teachers to “ask a few but better questions” (p. 13).

In addition to the method or strategy of asking questions, building on prior knowledge, summarising, and prediction are equally of high importance; however, they are the least used, thereby posing dire consequences on the performance of learners. In addition to the least used strategies, modelling, dialogue, and visual materials are also the least used, because only one teacher participant was observed using them.

The study found that only two teachers use the strategy of summarising in their lessons, whereas the rest of the four participants do not use the method or rather did not use the method during the observation session to collect data.

The researcher observed that the teacher participants who were praised for using the summarising method or strategy did not use it effectively. The teachers had shortcomings such as not giving clear instructions in the reading comprehension passages, inappropriate length of passages, and insufficient graded practical activities to summarise. Teachers who incorrectly use any method or strategy equally contribute to the consequences of implementation as the one who does not employ the strategies or methods at all.

The study found that factors such as overcrowded classrooms affect the effective use of strategies such as summarising when learners are unable to complete the tasks on their own, especially if the instructions are not clear because the teacher will not be able to go around the class to attend to every learner. This challenge could be tackled if teachers provide concise and perspicuous instructions for completing a task so that learners do not face the dilemma of being clueless in class. Furthermore, teachers could allocate students in groups or pairs so that strong and weak learners can complement one another.

Regarding the strategies and methods to teach reading comprehension, the researcher found that the problem lies mostly in the overuse of one or certain methods, which makes the teaching style rigid that learners lose interest as they are bored with the routine. Furthermore, teachers often recycle the same comprehension texts that do not fit certain strategies and methods to successfully

implement reading comprehension. Teachers ought to use authentic material that best suit the lifestyle and background of the learners – which they are more likely to be interested in because children and teenagers learn better from fun materials or exciting environments.

Prediction is one of the important teaching strategies or methods, and it may also be classified as a skill. Imagination plays a key role in the learning and information processing of learners because children, including adolescents, are creative beings who learn from fantasy. This understanding helps teachers to take the advantage of using the method of prediction as a strategy to stimulate the reading comprehension of learners; the strategy requires the learner to make the “best guess” based on their background knowledge (Reutel & Cooter, 2012). When learners are actively involved in the reading comprehension learning process, especially in thought (imagination), they are likely to create a mental image of the story in a given passage.

The study found that only one teacher participant used the strategy of prediction to teach reading comprehension. However, as it was with the case of summarising, the method was entirely not effectively employed due to the factor of insufficient resources. The teacher was unable to provide enough texts for every learner to read and practise; thus, some learners had to share the text with other learners. Even though this pair or group work is recommended for the benefit of peer learning, it is equally disadvantageous because the learners who did not receive a text will not be able to revise at home during self-study, or when necessary such as before the exams.

Moreover, the lack of resources was attributed to the inability to employ the strategy because facilities such as internet and teaching aids prevent the teacher from helping the learners to acquire the ability to predict outcomes by showing them a series of pictures from a story.

Furthermore, the lack of general or prior knowledge was observed as a challenge that hinders the effective use of the prediction teaching method or strategy in reading comprehension. Without background knowledge, learners are unable to foretell or guess the beginning or end of the story. The lack of general or prior knowledge is also attributed to the lack of motivation because there will be no curiosity and the urge to settle the argument in a story, which usually motivates learners to read further for them to develop internal motivation. Background or prior knowledge is an important aspect of this study of the factors that affect the implementation of reading comprehension, and it is also supported by the lens of the study - the Schema theory.

5.2.3 Challenges faced by learners in reading comprehension

Based on the interview focus groups and comprehension test, the study found that the main challenges that learners face in reading comprehension are: insufficient time to answer questions; difficult texts and terms; complicated figurative language and parts of speech; and lack of resources.

The study found that the time allocated for learners to answer reading comprehension is either too little that learners did not develop a pace and reading strategy, or that learners do not know how to manage their time because they did not manage to complete the comprehension test on time.

It is therefore evident that insufficient time and lengthy passages are some of the factors that hinder the successful implementation of reading comprehension. However, Oshikwanyama L1 teachers countered that the syllabus already dictates the length of the passage should be two and a half pages long. Oshikwanyama L1 teachers also added that the time of answering the question is always 45 minutes. However, this challenge could be alleviated if learners are taught to manage their time effectively and the different reading techniques, and if teachers ensure that they select texts of the appropriate length for learners to be able to finish on time.

In addition to insufficient time to complete reading comprehension tasks, difficult texts and terms were also found to be factors that affect the implementation of reading comprehension. This factor is related to insufficient time, or rather contributes to the factor of insufficient time, because when the texts are difficult to comprehend, or they are of an unrelated topic, and/or consists of many difficult terms, then learners are likely to spend more time on the passage to try to understand it before they can answer the questions.

Learners from the focus groups expressed that they do not often understand some terms from texts because the reading comprehension passages usually consist of difficult or archaic words that they are unable to relate to.

This finding was not surprising to the researcher because children who grow up or live in Windhoek are often referred to as urbanites, whose lifestyle is often characterised by the contemporary lifestyle; therefore, it is quite expected that the Oshikwanyama L1 learners will be

unable to identify with certain concepts and terms of their own Oshikwanyama culture that they may not be familiar with.

In addition to difficult or archaic words, learners who participated in the focus groups identified idioms and figurative language or figures of speech as aspects that complicate texts.

The interviews between teachers and learners reveal that all the participating schools are not equipped with appropriate libraries and resources. Teachers and learners indicated that teachers do not expose learners to reading materials in Oshikwanyama. The lack of materials in Oshikwanyama may have an influence on the reading culture of the learners. The lack of materials in Oshikwanyama lead to a lack of interest and self-confidence from learners. However, teachers cannot use the lack of materials as an excuse to not tackle challenges in reading comprehension.

5.2.4 Challenges faced by teachers in reading comprehension

The study found that teachers face the following challenges in reading comprehension:

- a. poor learner reading skills;
- b. teachers qualification and experience;
- c. lack of proper strategies to teach reading comprehension;
- d. insufficient time to cover the syllabus content;
- e. lack of background knowledge; and
- f. poor vocabulary.

5.2.5 Possible solutions

Teachers and learners suggested the following solutions to improve reading comprehension, which are parallel to the challenges that they face in reading comprehension:

- a. Improve teaching and learning strategies.
- b. Improve and enhance reading skills and strategies.
- c. Instil the reading culture.
- d. Teach learners to manage time.
- e. Teach and enhance learners' vocabulary.
- f. Select appropriate, authentic learning materials/texts.

5.3 Recommendations

The study recommends that:

- a. Teachers should attend workshops for areas such as reading comprehension for continuous staff development.
- b. Teacher training institutions should emphasise on practical teaching methods for especially reading comprehension.
- c. Schools should be equipped with the necessary teaching resources that will facilitate reading comprehension.
- d. Schools should be equipped with the relevant resources and resource centres/libraries.

5.4 Summary

This chapter, being the last chapter of the study, concluded the study by highlighting the findings of the study under the sections: teacher qualification and experience; teaching methods and

strategies for reading comprehension; challenges faced by learners in reading comprehension; challenges faced by teachers in reading comprehension; and the possible solutions. The chapter provided a detailed discussion of the conclusions of the study, and finally, it provided the recommendations by the researcher.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for teachers

Question 1

| | | | |
|--|---------------------|---|--|
| 1.1 Region of your school | | | |
| 1.2 Name of school | | | |
| 1.3 Sex/Gender | | | |
| 1.4 Age group | Under 20 years | 1 | |
| | 21 – 30 years | 2 | |
| | 31 – 40 years | 3 | |
| | 41 – 50 years | 4 | |
| | Over 50m years | 5 | |
| 1.5 Years of teaching experience in the Khomas Region | 0 - 5 years | 1 | |
| | 6 -10 years | 2 | |
| | 11 – 15 years | 3 | |
| | 16 – 20 years | 4 | |
| | More than 20 years. | 5 | |
| 1.6 Highest teaching qualification | Certificate | 1 | |
| | Diploma | 2 | |
| | Bachelor | 3 | |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------|---|--|
| | Other (specify)..... | 4 | |
| | | 5 | |
| 1.7 Which other subjects do you teach? | | | |
| 1.8 Teacher/learner ratio | | | |

Question 2

- 2.1 What strategies do Oshikwanyama L1 use to teach reading comprehension?
- 2.2 What do you understand the term 'reading comprehension'?
- 2.3 How often do you give your learner reading comprehension tasks? If yes, which ones?
- 2.4 What is the purpose of reading comprehension in your class?
- 2.5 What skills do learners acquire during reading comprehension tasks? Explain.
- 2.6 Do you think your learners struggle with reading to understand texts? If yes, why do you think so?
- 2.7 Which reading activities do you think are likely to enable learners to perform better? If yes, explain.

Question 3

- 3.1 What challenges hinder learners from understanding the reading passages?
- 3.2 Did you have the training in teaching read comprehension?
- 3.3 Do you think the training was effective?
- 3.4 How do you plan reading comprehension activities for your learners?
- 3.5 Which type of reading comprehension activities do you find effective?
- 3.6 Why do you think learners fail to answer questions correctly?

Question 4

- 4.1 What can Oshikwanyama L1 do to improve reading comprehension?
- 4.2 Which teaching methods do you use to improve and instil reading comprehension skills?
- 4.3 Which types of questions do you ask your learners?

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix 2: Test for learners

Comprehensive passage 1 (translated from Oshikwanyama into English)

Read the following passages and answer the question below.

Leadwood

The scientific name for leadwood is *Combretum imberbe*, which belongs to the family Combretaceae. It is a medium to a large deciduous tree, sometimes reaching 20m. The crown is roundish and open, and new growth is straight with opposite spine-tipped side branches. In the Cuvelai basin, leadwood is associated with Marula and Jackals Bessie, and it is found in various types of woodlands along drainage lines. It is equally common on alluvial soils and on clay soils. The scientific name, *imberbe*, means beardless, referring to the lack of hair on the leaves. The tree is characterised by its leaves without hair.

Compare this wood with other wood in Cuvelai basin like the fig tree. Think of trees like Marula tree, a person can climb it but not the lead and fig tree.

The bark is normally pale grey, but it is sometimes darker, smooth, and cracked in rectangular flakes, resembling a crocodile skin. Young branches are smooth and covered with dark brown scales.

The leaves are small, 5x2 cm, without hair but they are covered with silvery scales on both sides. The characteristic of grey-green colour of the leaves gives the tree the greyish appearance.

The shoots are thorn - like strong, enough to puncture a car tyre when lying on the ground.

The fruit is four-winged and only 1.5 cm across. It is densely covered with silvery scales, and it retains a yellowish-green colour even when mature. It dries to light yellowish brown. The fruits mature from February to June, but they will often stay on the tree until the next flowering season in December.

The heartwood is dark and extremely hard, heavy, and very durable. It is difficult to work with, but it is excellent for fencing. Firstly, the wood is used for making mortars. That is where Mahangu flour is produced as staple food. Its second use is to make pestles and hoe-blades before metal was available. The tree yields excellent slow burning fuelwood and probably makes the world's best charcoal.

Leadwood is often found in rows around fields, making a nice and productive live fence. Such a fence sometimes occurs where seed-bearing branches are used as brushwood fence around the Mahangu field. When the seeds drop to the ground, some of them germinate in the rainy season, and they are protected under the branches the seedling can grow into trees. The advantages are twofold: the trees will act as a windbreak to protect the crops, and the farmer will have a fence producing sticks, timber fuelwood, and browse for the animals.

Leadwood also has medical and cosmetic value. Smoke from burning leaves is inhaled to relieve a cough and cold. Leaves are dried and given to cattle bitten by a snake. Matabele uses the ash as toothpaste, especially woman. Olden day ladies mixed the ash of lead and apply in the hair when the hair dried, it will just come out like the hair being permed! The boiled roots yield a dark-brown dye and the fruits threaded on a line make a beautiful necklace.

It is also used in construction, for example, in railway and mine sleepers. The wood is hard that it produces good quality furniture and timbers that can be used for commercial purposes. The tree yields the best slow burning fuelwood and probably makes the world's best charcoal.

The tree exudes an edible gum liked by birds. It is one of the four species of trees in Owamboland which have edible gum. It is liked by birds.

Comprehensive passage 2 (Translated from Oshikwanyama into English)

Commiphora

The scientific name is *Commiphora*, which means gum-bearing tree. There are a lot of *Commiphora* in Owamboland, and there are two types: one is female and the other one is male. More than forty different *Commiphora* species are represented in Southern Africa. Of these fifteen are naturally growing in Northern Namibia. The most common *Commiphora* species growing here are poison grub *Commiphora*, sand *Commiphora*, and velvet *Commiphora*. They are small trees 5 – 8 m in height. They are well adapted to dry areas and are usually found on rocky or sandy soil, but sometimes also grow on clay.

The leaves contain bitter tannin, and they are not much browsed by livestock. However, in periods of drought the leaves will be eaten and thus the tree can play an important role as a fodder reserve. This can help livestock survive unfavourable periods.

Firstly, the traditional drinking cup used for traditional beer and other local drinks is usually made from Commiphora. It is also used by carpenters as handles for knives and axes. Farmers grow it and use the live tree as a place where chicken roosts during the night, thus protected against snakes and surikates. The gum is considered a good insecticide, and if applied to wood it will prevent the corn-beetle attack.

It is also important to farmers because even if it is not normally browsed by livestock, during drought, livestock is forced to browse it, thus assist them to pass through that difficult time. The gum exuded from Commiphoras is sometimes mixed with fat and used as perfumed body lotion especially by women applying it in their blankets and clothes. This lotion is sold in markets.

In many places, resin and gum of Commiphora are used as medicine. It is made into a plaster which is applied in cases of stomach pain and in case of fever it can be applied to the head. The washed bark mixed with salt is applied to the snake bites. Tuberous roots are used to brush the teeth the tuber contains a sweet juice like by hunters. In Caprivi and Botswana dug-out canoes are made from Commiphora wood, as it can easily float. If you want to grow this tree is very easy.

Question 1

Read the two passages describing the two wood trees found in Northern Namibia and contrast the differences related to the uses of these two wood trees.

Appendix 3: Interview guide (learners)

1. How do you feel towards Oshikwanyama L1 taught at school?
2. Do you understand Oshikwanyama texts well?
3. If yes, what helps you to understand the texts?
4. If no, what hinders you from understanding the texts?
5. I have noticed in the class, during various reading comprehension texts that now and then you struggle to give answers on reading and directed writing activities. What could be the problem?
6. You have performed well or not well, in this reading comprehension activity, how did you do it?
7. Did you find the passage difficult to read? What exactly was difficult?
8. Did you encounter any difficult words in the text that may have interfered with your understanding of the text?
9. If there were difficult words, what did you do when you could not understand them?
10. Is there anything else you want to tell me about the difficulty of Oshikwanyama L1?

Appendix 4: Interview protocol (teachers)

Do your learners understand Oshikwanyama texts well?

1. If yes, what helps them to understand the texts?
2. If no, what hinders them from understanding the texts?
3. I have noticed in the class during various reading comprehension texts that now and then your learners struggle to give answers to reading and directed writing activities. What could be the problem?
4. Your learners have performed well or not well in this reading comprehension activity, how did you do it?
5. Did your learners find the passage difficult to read? If yes, what exactly was difficult?
6. Did your learners encounter any difficult words in this text which may have interfered with their understanding of the text?
7. If there were difficult words, what did they do when they could not understand them?
8. How are you feeling towards Oshikwanyama L1 taught at school?
9. Is there anything else you want to tell me about what makes Oshikwanyama L1 difficult or easy?

Appendix 5: Observation checklist

Strategies used by Oshikwanyama L1 to teach reading comprehension skills in the Khomas

Region.

| Strategy | Tuli | Ndaenda | Rutty | Elly | Kalola | Tangi |
|----------------------------|------|---------|-------|------|--------|-------|
| Asking questions | ✓ | ✓ | X | X | ✓ | ✓ |
| Building on prior learning | ✓ | X | X | ✓ | x | X |
| Vocabulary enhancement | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | x | X |
| Summarising | ✓ | X | X | X | x | ✓ |
| Modelling | ✓ | X | X | x | x | X |
| Explaining | ✓ | ✓ | X | x | ✓ | ✓ |
| Dialogue | ✓ | X | X | x | x | X |
| Prediction | ✓ | X | X | x | x | X |
| Visual materials | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Appendix 6: Profile of teacher participants

| Name of the school | Name of the teacher | Sex | Age | Highest teaching qualification | No of years served as Oshikwanyama teacher | No of learners |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------|-----------------|---|---|-----------------------|
| Kola SSS | Tuli | F | 41 – 50 | DEAL | 6-10 | 80 |
| Kakodi SSS | Ndaenda | F | 41 – 50 | Bachelor | 16 -20 | 200 |
| Ndingili SSS | Elly | F | Over 50 | ECP | More then 20 | 300 |
| Ndjaba SSS | Ruty | F | Between 21 - 30 | Diploma | 0 - 5 | 260 |
| Kavandje SSS | Tangi | F | Between 21 -30 | Honours Degree majoring in Oshikwanyama | 0 – 5 | 156 |
| Shimbungu SSS | Kalola | M | Between 41 - 50 | Honours Degree majoring in | 0 - 5 | 85 |

Appendix 7: Pilot study

Question 1

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| 1.1 Name of school | | | |
| Sex/Gender | | | |
| 1.3 Age group | Under 20 years | 1 | |
| | 21 – 30 years | 2 | |
| | 31 – 40 years | 3 | |
| | 41 – 50 years | 4 | |
| | Over 50m years | 5 | |
| 1.4 Years of teaching experience | 0 - 5 years | 1 | |
| | 6 -10 years | 2 | |
| | 11 – 15 years | 3 | |
| | 16 – 20 years | 4 | |
| | More than 20 years. | 5 | |
| 1.5 Highest teaching qualification | Certificate | 1 | |
| | Diploma | 2 | |
| | Bachelor | 3 | |
| | | 4 | |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|--|
| | Other (specify)..... | 5 | |
| Teacher-learner ratio | | | |

2. What strategies do Oshikwanyama L1 use to teach reading comprehension? (*Rephrased*)

2.1 What is reading comprehension?

2.2 How often do you give your learners reading comprehension tasks?

2.3 What is the purpose of reading comprehension in class?

2.4 Which type of reading comprehension do you do with your learners?

2.5 What skills do learners acquire through reading comprehension tasks?

2.6 Do you think your learners struggle to read to understand the content being taught? *Combined with question 2.7.*

2.7 If yes, why do you think they struggle

2.8 Which reading activities do you think are likely to enable learners to perform better?

3. Which challenges hinder learners from understanding the content?

3.1 Did you have the training in teaching comprehension?

3.2 Do you think this training was effective?

3.3 What difficulties do your learners seem to have in order to understand the reading comprehension?

3.4 How do you plan reading comprehension activities with your learners?

3.5 Which obstacles do you encounter when planning your reading comprehension?

3.6 Which type of reading comprehension activities do you think are effective?

3.7 Why do you think learners fail to answer reading comprehension questions correctly?

4. What can Oshikwanyama L1 do to improve reading comprehension?

4.1 Which methods do you use to improve the teaching comprehension skills?

4.2 Which types of questions do you ask your learners?

4.3 Which skills do want your learners to learn?

4.4 Which strategies do you use to improve reading comprehension?

Appendix 8: Request for permission

P O Box 99558
University of Namibia
Windhoek

The Regional Director
Khomas Region: Directorate of Education
Private Bag 13186
Windhoek

Subject: Request for permission to conduct a study in schools of Khomas region.

I am Vilima Ngonyofi Haukongo, a student at the University of Namibia and currently registered with the Post Graduate Degree. As part of the course requirement, I should contact and submit a research thesis. I am hereby requesting permission to conduct a study in schools in the Khomas region.

The focus of the study is to investigate the challenges that Oshikwanyama L1 teachers encounter when implementing reading comprehension skills. I plan to collect data at the beginning of September 2016 - early enough before the Grade 12 learners commence with their national examinations. The study will not interfere with the normal teaching hours, as I plan to conduct the study after the normal teaching hours.


Thank you very much

Yours sincerely

.....

VN Haukongo

Appendix 9: Ethical clearance



UNAM
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: **FOE/155/2016** Date: **5 December, 2016**

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Title of Project: Challenges Oshikwanyama First Language Teachers Face In Implementing Reading Comprehension Skills At Five Selected Schools, Khomas Region

Nature/Level of Project: Masters

Researcher: V. Haukongo

Student Number: 9978747

Faculty: Faculty of Education


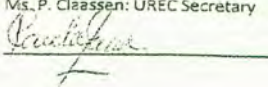
Supervisors: Dr. C. Shaimemanya (Main) Prof. J. Kangira (Co)

Take note of the following:

- (a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the UREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
- (b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the UREC.
- (c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the UREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by UREC.
- (d) The UREC retains the right to:
 - (i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
 - (ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

UREC wishes you the best in your research.

Prof. P. Odonkor: UREC Chairperson **Ms. P. Claassen: UREC Secretary**

Appendix 10: Research permission letter Ministry of Education



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
KHOMAS REGIONAL COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Tel: [09 264 61] 293 9411
Fax: [09 264 61] 231 367/248 251

Private Bag 13236
WINDHOEK

Ms V.N. Haukongo
P.O. Box 99558
University of Namibia
Main Campus
081248 1990

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN SCHOOLS OF KHOMAS REGION

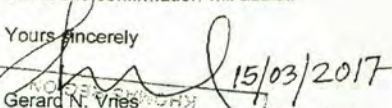
Your letter dated 30 January 2017 which was received on the 6 February 2017 bears reference.

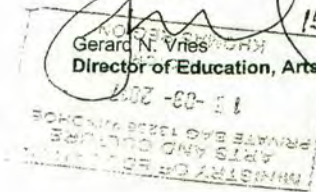
Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct education research for your Master of Education Degree titled "Challenges Oshikwanyama First Language teachers face in implementing reading comprehension skills" in the following schools: Windhoek High School, A. Shipena Secondary School, Augustineum Secondary School, Ella Du Plessis Secondary School, and Jacob Marengo Tutorial College in Windhoek, Khomas Region and the following condition must be adhere to:

- o Permission must be sought from the School Principals;
- o Teaching and learning in the respective schools should not be disrupted;
- o Teachers/learners who will take part in the research should do so voluntarily;
- o A Report with the finding/recommendations of the research must be provided to the Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture, Khomas Regional Council

I trust this confirmation will assist.

Yours sincerely


Gerard N. Vries
Director of Education, Arts and Culture



Appendix 11: Permission letter from UNAM

CENTRE FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

University of Namibia, Private Bag 13301, Windhoek, Namibia
340 Mandume Ndamutayo Avenue, Pioneers Park
☎ +264 61 206 3275/4562, Fax +264 61 206 3290; URL: <http://www.unam.edu.na>



RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER

Student Name: Ms. Vilima Haukongo

Student number: 9978747

Programme: Master of Education degree

Approved research title: Challenges Oshikwanyama First Language Teachers Face in implementing Reading Comprehension Skills at Five Selected Schools, Khomas Region

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that the above mentioned student is registered at the University of Namibia for the programme indicated. The proposed study met all the requirements as stipulated in the University guidelines and has been approved by the relevant committees.

The proposal adheres to ethical principles as per attached Ethical Clearance Certificate. Permission is hereby granted to carry out the research as described in the approved proposal.

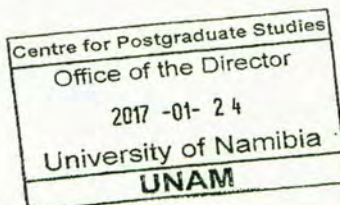
Best Regards

Name

Director: Centre for Postgraduate Studies

Tel: +264 61 2063275

E-mail: directorpgs@unam.na



27 Jan 2017

Date