

**INVESTIGATING READING DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH  
SECOND LANGUAGE OF GRADE 3 LEARNERS IN ONE  
PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE KHOMAS EDUCATION REGION OF  
NAMIBIA**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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**By**

**Rauha Nehafo Hartney**

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**Main Supervisor: Prof. C. D. Kasanda**

**Co-Supervisor: Mr. J. U. Hengari**

## Approval Page

This thesis has been examined and is approved as meeting the required standards for partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education.

----- 1. Internal Examiner	----- Date	
----- 2. Internal Examiner	----- Date	-----
----- 3. Dean of Faculty of Education	----- Date	-----
----- 4. External Examiner	----- Date	-----

**Statement of Originality**

The work contained in this research was completed by the author at the University of Namibia during 2006 till 2009. It is an original work except where references are made and neither has it been submitted for any other degree at another university.

I declare that ‘An Investigation into the Reading Difficulties Experienced by Grade 3 Learners of English as a Second Language: A case of one Primary School in the Khomas Education Region of Namibia’ is my work and that all the sources which I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and neither has it been, nor will it be submitted for the award of any other degree.

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my two little grandsons; Kevin Christoph Ebenezer and Willem Petrus Tuhafeni and their mother Selma Beverly Shekupe Muthithi Taamba.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This school case study was undertaken to investigate the reading difficulties experienced by the Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language in one primary school in the Khomas Education Region. The learners' reading problems have been encountered by the researcher throughout her teaching career. The researcher was worried by two key issues: firstly, most of the primary school learners of English as a Second Language in Namibia have a problem in reading it and secondly, those who can read it have a problem in writing. The study, therefore, investigated the factors which contribute to the reading difficulties experienced by the Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language at one primary school in the Khomas Region.

The researcher adopted both the qualitative and the quantitative approaches for the collection of data and used the case study method and convenience sampling procedures to select the respondents. Data were collected through standardized, open-ended interviews for the parents and the in – depth semi – structured interview guides for the teachers. Five reading tests were used for the Grade 3 learners as data collecting instruments. A grounded theory approach was used to offer a framework for carrying out the research, as well as for the analysis of the data. Data were analyzed by coding all responses from the interviews and reading tests. The coded information was then presented according to the study objectives. Data were then presented in tables and narrative forms according to the research objectives.

Some of the findings of the study were that insufficient exposure to the target language resulted in it becoming a barrier to learning writing. The study also found that the classes were overcrowded with 40 learners and the teacher-learner ratio was 1:40, hence teachers did not work with individual learners and gave more attention to those with reading difficulties. It was further found that there was a lack of reading materials in the school because the Ministry of Education only provided very few reading materials. In addition, the lower primary learners did not have access to the library.

The other finding was that the reading problem occurred because some children did not attend kindergartens. Children started primary school with insufficient literary knowledge and skills in relevant domains such as general verbal abilities; the ability to attend to the sounds of language as distinct from its meaning; familiarity with the basic purposes and mechanisms of reading, and letter knowledge.

The study recommended that the children's home languages should be taken into account by the curriculum developers, as well as teachers, in designing instruction. The home or local language should be the medium of instruction in Grades 1 – 3 with English only as a subject. An important step towards preventing reading difficulties was to reduce the number of children who enter school with inadequate literacy-knowledge skills. Reading materials in sufficient quantities should be provided by the Ministry of Education. Class size and teacher-learner ratio should be reduced to enable teachers to interact on a one to one basis with all the learners in class by accepting only those children who have attended kindergarten.

## *LIST OF ACRONYMS*

<i>ADD</i>	=	<i>Attention Deficit Disorder</i>
<i>BICS</i>	=	<i>Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills</i>
<i>CALP</i>	=	<i>Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency</i>
<i>CVC</i>	=	<i>Consonant-Vowel-Consonant</i>
<i>ELS</i>	=	<i>Educational Library Services</i>
<i>ERD</i>	=	<i>English Reading Difficulties</i>
<i>ESL</i>	=	<i>English as a Second Language</i>
<i>HOD</i>	=	<i>Head of Department</i>
<i>MBESC</i>	=	<i>Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture</i>
<i>ME</i>	=	<i>Ministry of Education</i>
<i>MEC</i>	=	<i>Ministry of Education and Culture</i>
<i>NRP</i>	=	<i>National Reading Panel</i>
<i>RD</i>	=	<i>Reading Difficulties</i>
<i>ZPD</i>	=	<i>Zone of Proximal Development</i>

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

According to Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) reading is essential to success in our society. The ability to read is highly valued and important for social and economic

advancement. Anbar (1986), Backmann (1983), in Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998), Bissex (1989) and Jackson (1991) point out that reading is a complex developmental challenge that we know to be intertwined with many other developmental accomplishments such as attention, memory, language and motivation. When the child reads well in English it means that she/he has gained a fundamental knowledge of the principles of the English alphabetical writing system.

Learning to read and write begins long before the school years, as the biological, cognitive and social precursors are put into place (Stanovich and Siegel, 1984). Stanovich and Siegel (1984) further state that the capacity to read and write is related to children's age related developmental timetables. There is no clear agreement on the precise chronological or mental age nor on a particular developmental level that children must reach before they are ready to learn to read and write. Without reading skills, learners cannot understand the contents of their textbooks. This is the main reason why many Namibian learners do not progress satisfactorily at school (Educational Library Services (ELS), 2003).

Reading difficulties among primary school learners is an issue of concern in any society (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998). Reading is considered to be a basic need in the modern world of science and technology. Many children in Namibia's lower primary schools lack proper reading skills and cannot read properly. Some learners have dropped out of school without acquiring the necessary reading skills while others read without understanding what they are reading (Kuutondokwa, 2003, p . 8).

For the child reading is a key to success in school, to the development of out-of-school interests, to the enjoyment of leisure time and to personal and social adjustment. Reading helps the child to adjust to his age mates, to become independent of parents and teachers, to select and prepare for an occupation and to achieve social responsibilities. Dechant and Smith (1987) further state that as culture becomes more complex, reading plays an increasingly greater role in satisfying personal needs and in promoting social awareness and growth. It is through reading that one acquires many of his/her standards of

behaviour and morality, broadens his/her interests, tastes and understanding of others. According to Dechant and Smith (1987), every person who knows how to read has it in his/her power to magnify themselves, to multiply the ways in which they exist, to make their life full, significant and interesting. But, above all, in the modern school, effective reading is the most important avenue to effective learning. Reading is so interrelated with the total educational process that educational success requires successful reading.

*According to the basic competencies on reading in the Curriculum for the Lower Primary Phase Grades 1 - 4 (NIED, MBESC, 2005, p. 15), by the end of Grade 3, the learner should be able to:*

- Read prepared and unprepared texts of about 50 words from fictional and factual texts.
- Correctly answer comprehension questions on the texts and talk freely about them.
- Find basic information from factual texts.
- Demonstrate good reading habits through eagerness to read.

Imene (2001, p. 91), notes that schools complain frequently that many primary school children cannot read. The ones, who can read have a problem in writing. She states that many teachers and principals have blamed the reading problem on the policy of ‘automatic promotion’. Imene reports that when asked why many learners do not know how to read at their expected stages, teachers and principals responded “that many teachers were not serious with their teaching because of the policy of automatic promotion, because they knew learners would pass anyway” (p. 91). While Imene’s (2001) study identified a number of reading difficulties and challenges surrounding teachers, we do not know if similar factors will be identified in this study.

## 1.2 Automatic Promotion

Automatic promotion is a system of promoting learners through the school system, regardless of their level of performance. According to Imene (2001), automatic learner promotion is an issue under constant debate, mainly, in countries including Namibia that are practicing it. This type of promotion is done in various ways. In some school systems, learners should meet performance standards and academic requirements for them to be promoted, while in others, it is a must that all learners should be promoted. Automatic promotion is usually done on the basis that retention might be damaging to children's social and emotional development (Imene, 2001).

According to Imene (2001), the social promotion argument was used to introduce this policy in Namibia. The Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (1996) stipulates that slow learners who are held back may be more harmed than helped in their development. A learner may not master everything that is being learnt in a certain grade but is more likely to develop by going on to a new grade and acquiring what is possible there, than being kept back. In addition, the decision to introduce automatic promotion was mainly influenced by the country's historical background and by the social and economic perspectives. From the historical perspective, education in the apartheid era was characterized by inequality between whites and blacks. Therefore, automatic promotion was an attempt to address the inequality that prevailed in the apartheid era.

From the social perspective, it is worth considering that every person in life would like to succeed. Imene (2001) as stated in Auala, Hess, Lefoka, Mazibuko, Motlomelo and Tsayang (2001, p. 90) states that self perception influences one's action. She indicates that how people interpret the results of their own performance and attainment, informs and alters their environments and self-beliefs which, in turn, informs and alters subsequent performance. Social promotion therefore can act as a source of a learner's self-belief that enables him/her to recognize his/her learning capabilities and to attain the best results.

From an economic perspective, it has been shown by Imene (2001) that repetition by learners increases the government's expenditure on lower primary education. Imene

(2001) further argues that when learners repeat, the government has to pay for these specific learners twice or three times and this money could have been used for something else in the education sector. Supporting this argument, the Presidential Commission (GRN, 1999, p. 69) Report on Education warned, “If uncontrolled repetition were possible, with the same amount of resources, the school system would have to be shortened by several years in order to free the money to pay for the extra children within the system.”

It has been stipulated in the policy document of the MBESC (1996, p.33) that all learners will progress through 10 years of Basic Education in as near to a normal time as possible. The policy document further maintains that only in cases where the class teacher/teaching team in consultation with the principal and parents are absolutely convinced that a learner would definitely not benefit from progressing to the next grade, should a learner be held back and receive compensatory teaching towards promoting the next year. This explains that a learner can only be held back in the grade if he/she has very poor academic skills.

According to Imene (2001), the learners’ promotion in Namibia is not “automatic” as many people seem to understand it. The argument here is based on the fact that, learner promotion in Namibia depends largely on the continuous assessment record of each individual learner in the class. This means that teachers are expected to make use of continuous assessment to make judgments as to whether a learner has to be promoted or not at the end of the year. If a learner did not meet the basic competencies which each learner should meet to be promoted, he or she can be held back in the grade.

Other factors responsible for reading difficulties are factors within the individual such as poor sight, factors in the home such as hunger and poverty, social factors, such as loneliness and cultural environment, factors in the school environment, such as shyness and the teaching methods by unskilled teachers (Richek, Caldewell, Hennings and Lerner, 1996). All these factors need special attention if teachers are to help in rectifying reading difficulties experienced by children in schools.

Many children in Namibia, especially those in towns and cities, enter an English medium school from a traditional setting with a different primary language. The school where the current study was conducted uses English as the medium of instruction throughout all the grades, i.e. from Grade 1 up to Grade 7. In such a situation, teachers are faced with a challenge to teach learners who come to school with different first languages from the language used in school and in reading materials at school (Hengari, 2007, p. 2).

### ***1.3 The School Context***

One school which offered English as a Second Language in the Khomas Education Region participated in the study. The school is located in a semi urban setting roughly 4 kilometres north of Windhoek City and lies in the centre of Katutura. Katutura is one of the suburbs in Windhoek City where a large number of people stays. The school is one of the largest schools in the town with a net enrolment of about 1109 learners. The school has 30 teachers and 26 classrooms. The average teacher-learner ratio was 1:40. The school's facilities were fairly adequate. There were 26 classrooms including a small hall, which was also used as a classroom. Each classroom had enough desks. Textbooks were supplied by the Ministry of Education and one textbook was shared among three learners. Each child was given a list of exercise books to be bought by the parents. The school was surrounded by a wall fence. Seven of the 30 teachers were males. The head teacher and the two heads of departments, including the researcher, were females. The three Grade 3 teachers were all females. Their years of experience in teaching ranged from 4 years to 16 years. Besides English which is a medium of instruction at this school from grade 1 onwards, some learners took Afrikaans and some took Oshindonga as subjects.

### **1.4 Language Policy**

#### **1.4.1 What is a Language?**

Language is the most important key to learning. Right from birth, language is the most important means of communication. Children play and experiment with language, demonstrating and enjoying their ability to acquire language and even to turn it upside down for fun (Avenstrup, 2003, p. 21). Children come to school still in a stage of acquiring their mother tongue, which needs continued learning for at least another six years if it is to be functional, and beyond that, if it is to be more than just functional. Hence the language policy in education, which stipulates that the mother tongue (or local familiar language) where mother-tongue instruction is not possible, should be taught throughout basic education is important.

Avenstrup (2003) further states that learning and developing in one's mother-tongue is crucial to establishing a positive self-image, an affirmation of one's own culture to the primary understanding of the world. Learning a second language or a foreign language widens one's way of experiencing and interpreting the world, and enables wider communication. However, if learning the mother-tongue stops at an early stage of schooling, it makes it more difficult for concept formation, and to relate what is learnt through another language to one's personal experience and culture as one grows up. It also gives a strong signal that the mother tongue is inferior to the second or foreign language. Therefore, both in terms of improving learning and strengthening identity and for language ecology the mother tongue should be taught all the way through school.

Since our cognitive, emotional and social development is highly dependent on language, it is essential to develop language in all learning situations, such as listening, reading, speaking and writing. Listening skills are essential prerequisites for communication, and emphasis needs to be put on ensuring that learners listen to each other as well as to the teacher to explore and share knowledge, and that the teacher should listen to the learners. On the other hand, developing language for learning is not only a question of being able to listen and talk; literacy is the most important skill for learning in school since reading and producing texts is a main means of developing understanding. Avenstrup (2003) further maintains that creating a print-rich environment in the classroom promotes literacy learning. As writing skills develop, learners must be encouraged to write

different types of texts and discourses form short texts, writing down questions, sentences, answers to close-ended questions and discursive texts. Textbooks and materials must demonstrate a wide range of discourse, good quality text, and clear guidance in explanations and tasks. The challenge for a language policy, (Angula, 1992), is that language skills and literacy should be first developed in the mother tongue or local familiar language and then transferred to English.

Shortly after independence in 1990, Namibia perceived the need to have a new language policy for schools in order to promote mother tongue use, alongside English, in schools and colleges of education. As mentioned earlier, mother tongue undoubtedly plays a crucial role in the acquisition of any second language, including English in the case of Namibia. One of the policy goals is that education should promote the language and cultural identity of learners through the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in Grades 1 - 3 and the teaching of mother tongue throughout the formal education (MBESC, 2003). According to the language policy, (Angula, 1992), Grades 1 - 3 learners should be taught either through the mother tongue or a predominant local language. The policy further states that if parents or the school wishes to use English as the medium of instruction in the Lower Primary phase, permission must be obtained from the Minister of Education, Sport and Culture with well-grounded, convincing motivation (MBESC, 2003, p. 4). Although the policy states that learners should be taught through the medium of their mother tongue in early years of schooling and that all languages should be treated equally, the implementation of the language policy was not evenly applied over the whole country, therefore, many learners did not have the opportunity to learn through their mother tongues. The school under study was one of the schools which offered mother tongue only as a subject for study throughout the Grades (1 – 7). Government schools in the Khomas Education Region had a choice to opt for English as a medium of instruction and a mother tongue or local language offered as a subject. The fact that Namibia is a multilingual country, the equality of all national languages regardless of the number of speakers or the level of development of a particular language and the cost of implementing the language policy left the Khomas Education Region

government schools with no option other than to offer a mother tongue or a local language as a subject in all primary grades.

### **1.4.2 Language Acquisition**

Bilingualism brings about many social, economic and academic opportunities and bilinguals often experience some fun in acquiring a new language, yet there are also challenges involved (Bifuh-Ambe, 2009). Some factors which make learning English a challenge are the experiences in the first language and the learners' age. Language proficiency includes the ability to use language skills effectively in both social and academic contexts.

Harley, Allen, Cummins and Swain (1990) in Bifuh-Ambe (2009), note that it takes on average two years to develop basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) while the development of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) requires a period of five to seven years. Therefore, BICS and CALP must both be sufficiently well developed for a learner to attain the level of proficiency required to meet the cognitive challenges of the classroom.

Obviously, it will take more than two years for a Namibian child or even a Namibian adult to develop basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) due to the fact that the social interaction is influenced by the country's historical background. Children and adults when interacting, do so mainly in Afrikaans, the colonial language or in their home languages. Hence, English is only used as a medium of instruction in the schools. Even though, it is also used in the media, children tend to learn Afrikaans faster than English as it is used more socially. Therefore, it will take even more years than what is expected for a Namibian child to develop the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in English language.

### **1.5 Statement of the Problem**

Reading is essential for success in any society. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to establish the factors which contribute to the reading difficulties in English as a Second Language among the Grade 3 learners in a school in the Khomas Education Region in Namibia. It was also to explore the strategies that are used to address reading difficulties among the primary school learners.

## **1.6 Research Objectives**

The following were the main objectives of the study:

1. To identify the factors which contribute to the reading difficulties experienced by Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language at Namutuni Primary School.
2. To identify the aspects within the English Second Language structure that pose difficulties among Grade 3 learners and, therefore, contributing to the reading difficulties as experienced at Namutuni Primary School.
3. To identify strategies which are used to address reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners at Namutuni Primary School.

## 1.7 Significance of the Study

The information from this study would serve as the basis for sensitizing the teachers about the importance of reading and to create awareness about the use of effective reading methods. The research findings might also be useful to the Ministry of Education as well as to all the primary school education stakeholders, including teachers and parents, to enable them to address more successfully the reading difficulties of the Grade 3 learners in Namibia. The findings might also be helpful for learners to improve their reading skills through the teaching methods used by their teachers who receive this information from my thesis.

## 1.8 Limitations

*There were many hindrances that limited the research process. The researcher agrees with De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2005, p. 118) who state, "Potential limitations are often numerous even in the most carefully planned research study and it is important that they be listed." At the time the research was being carried out, the researcher was busy performing her professional duties as a teacher, which was time consuming. Financial constraints also hindered the researcher from collecting a wider range of information from the target population. Therefore, the research was carried out in one primary school only where the researcher works as a teacher. Instead of visiting every learner's house and holding interviews with the parents, an invitation letter requesting the parent to come for an interview was sent with a learner. Calling the parents to the interview at school rather than their homes could have affected their responses.*

*The fact that the teachers interviewed were the researcher's workmates might also have had an influence on their responses.*

## **1.9 Delimitations**

This study focused on Namutuni Primary School, one of the primary schools in the Plato Cluster in the Khomas Education Region which offers English as a Second Language. Amongst the five primary schools in the aforementioned cluster, this school had the second highest number of enrolled learners and highest number of teachers in 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2008).

## **1.10 Definition of Key Terms**

*It is generally assumed that the real world of the participants of a research project can only be understood if the words and expressions they used in a specific situation are revealed (Schurink (1998) in De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2005). To help the reader to understand the context of the study, the definitions of key concepts which underpinned this study are provided below.*

### **1.10.1 Reading**

The term reading refers to the process of recognition, interpretation and perception of written materials. Sheng (2000, p. 13) defines reading as the process of communication between the reader and the writer which involves the recognition of letters, words, phrases and clauses.

### **1.10.2 Reading Difficulties**

Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998, p. 93) define reading difficulties as the lower tail of a normal distribution of reading ability in the population. In other words individuals with reading difficulties are those whose achievement levels are lower than those of the rest of the people in the distribution.

### **1.10.3 Reading Efficiency**

According to Hayland (1995, p. 107), reading efficiency is a “method of approaching every reading task with a clear purpose and with the flexibility to adjust the reading strategy to the purpose at hand”.

### **1.10.4 Reading Frustration Level**

In this study, reading frustration level means a difficult text for the student to read. Less than 90% word accuracy ( <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/3415> ) .

### **1.10.5 Reading Skills Acquisition**

*It is a process of acquiring the basic skills necessary for learning to read. That is the ability to acquire meaning from print (Ekwall and Shanker, 1993).*

### **1.10.6 Automatic Promotion**

It is a system of promoting learners from one grade to the next throughout the school system, regardless of their level of performance (Imene, 2001).

### **1.10.7 Context Clues**

*Ekwall and Shanker (1993) define context clues as clues to the meaning and/or pronunciation of an unknown word*

*derived from the words preceding or following that word e.g., one can use context clues to determine that the missing word in the following sentence is “dog”; “The ..... is barking”.*

### *1.10.8 Decoding*

*Ekwall and Shanker (1993) define decoding as the process of taking words in print and changing them to spoken words. This is accomplished when the reader applies one or more of the following word recognition strategies: phonics, structural analysis and context clues.*

### **1.10.9 Fluency**

*Fluency is the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and vocal expression. The ability to read fluently is one of several critical factors necessary for reading comprehension. If a reader is not fluent, it may be difficult to remember what was read and to relate the ideas expressed in the text to his or her background knowledge. This accuracy and automaticity of reading serves as a bridge between decoding and comprehension expression (Ekwall and Shanker, 1993).*

### **1.10.10 Morphology**

According to Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998), morphology is the study of the structure and form of words in a language.

### **1.10.11 Neurological Dysfunction**

Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) define neurological dysfunction as a disorder of the mind caused by accidents that have involved damage to the brain.

### **1.10.12 Phonics**

The method of teaching people, how to read by correlating sounds with alphabetical symbols (Soanes and Stevenson, 1997).

### **1.10.13 Phonological Awareness**

Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) describe phonological awareness as a general ability to attend to the sounds of a language distinct from its meaning. For most children, an

awareness of the phonological structure of speech generally develops gradually over the pre-school years.

#### 1.10.14 Word Identification

In this study, word identification means that the reader could pronounce a word, even when he or she did not know what it meant. The terms “word identification;” “word recognition” and “decoding” are frequently used interchangeably. The new Literacy Dictionary defines both word recognition and word identification as the process of determining the pronunciation and some degree of meaning of unknown word (The New Literacy Dictionary, 1995).

#### 1.10.15 Word Recognition

*According to Ekwall and Shanker (1993, p. 21), word recognition is the ability of a reader to recognize words, usually referring only to recognition by sight or recognition without the aid of word analysis. Goulandris and Snowling (1991) in Funnel and Stuart (1995 p. 96) state that word recognition occurs when a written word is recognized as a familiar word and pronounced correctly, regardless of whether it appears in isolation or embedded in text.*

#### 1.10.16 Schemata

*According to Piaget (1972) in Craig (1989, p. 36), “Schemata” is a term for mental structures that process information, perceptions and experiences; individuals’ schemas change as they grow.*

#### 1.11 Summary

This chapter gave a general overview of the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the research objectives as well as the significance of the study. The next chapter discusses the various literature reviews on Reading Difficulties.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005, p. 123), literature is aimed at contributing towards a clear understanding of the nature and meaning of a problem that has been identified. Marshall and Rossman (1999, p. 43) in De Vos et al. (2005, p. 124) state that literature is an excellent source for selecting or focusing on a topic, as it reduces the chances of selecting an irrelevant or outdated topic by investigating what has already been done in a particular problem area. Rubin and Babbie (2001) in De Vos et al. (2005 p. 128) agree with Marshall and Rossmans (1999) that an early review of literature is a prime source for selecting a topic to begin with as it provides substantially better insight into the dimensions and complexity of the problem.

Therefore, Chapter 2 of this study reviews the factors which contribute to English Second Language reading difficulties among the primary school learners, the aspects within the English Second Language that learners find most reading difficulties with, and strategies that were used to address reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners. Although reading difficulties among Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language is an issue of concern there is little information about the topic in Namibia. “Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children” (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998), revealed that quite a number of studies have been done about reading difficulties among primary school learners, in general, but not on Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language in particular. Another literature review by Kuutondokwa (2003) was based on reading difficulties in Lower Primary in the USA. As indicated earlier, there is a dearth of research on this topic in Namibia.

## **2.2 Introduction to Reading**

According to Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998, p. 15) reading is a complex developmental challenge that is intertwined with many other developmental accomplishments; attention, memory, language and motivation.

### **2.2.1 Overview of Reading**

Reading is not only a cognitive, psycholinguistic activity, but also a social activity. Reading is a complex cognitive process requiring visual, auditory and motor skills to enable a child to recognize words and symbols, to associate them with the appropriate sounds and to invest them with meaning derived from previous experience. It has been established by Morris (1966) in Reid and Donaldson (1977) that reading achievement is related to the skill of the teacher, and that the child taught by untrained, inexperienced and unskilled teachers tend to be especially backward in reading (Reid and Donaldson, 1977, p. 62). According to Hengari (2007), reading is the ability to make sense of written or printed symbols. It includes word recognition, comprehension and interpretation, appreciation and application of what is read. It is an interaction with language that has been coded into print. Reading performance, good or poor, reflects the knowledge and competencies available to the learner and how these are activated and coordinated during the reading process. Reading is a prominent element of the entire education curriculum across all subject areas beginning in the earliest grade. Children with delays in reading will experience feelings of deep inadequacy. Reading is a language process. The child being taught to read must understand the relationship between reading and his/her language. The facets of reading that teachers must consider if they are to guide children's growth in reading includes decoding print into sound and decoding a graphic representative of language into meaning (Heilman, 1977).

At the launch of the Reading Promotion Campaign at Mandume Primary School in Windhoek on 30 October 2006, the Deputy Minister of Education, Dr Becky Ndjoze-Ojo,

stated that reading is a skill that is important for the learning process, academic performance, research, writing skills and decision making at all levels. Ndjoze-Ojo further noted that, according to research, children who read well in early grades are far more successful in later years, and those who fall behind often stay behind when it comes to academic achievement. She added that reading also opens doors to learning all academic subjects, because those who cannot read well are likely to drop out of school and be limited to manual and low-paying jobs throughout their lives.

Kuutondokwa (2003, p. 8) states that reading is one of the major problems among the youth in Namibia. Reading can be considered to be the basic need in the modern world of science and technology.

### **2.2.2 Child Development**

My research study was based on the theory of human development. The development of child's education has been influenced by various theories of child and learning development. Attitudes to education have understandably developed in parallel with current insights into the development of children. Piaget's and Vygotsky's approaches to cognitive development see children as confronted with information from their environment and as continuously involved in an attempt to organize, understand and adapt to the new information. According to Piaget, this happens through four continuously interacting processes namely, assimilation, accommodation, equilibration and adaptation (Craig, 1989, p. 36). In Piaget's terms, adaptation is the act of changing our thought processes when a new object or idea does not fit our concepts. Piaget further states that adaptation is the process by which infant schemata are elaborated, modified and developed (pp. 36-7, 160). By equilibration, Piaget means the basic process in human adaptation. In it, individuals seek a balance or fit between the environment and their own structures of thought.

Unlike learning theorists, who see human beings as types of passive machines that are acted upon by the environment, cognitive theorists see human beings as rational, active,

alert and competent. For them, human beings do not merely receive information, but they also process it. Thus, each person is a thinker and a creator of his or her reality.

### **2.2.3 Cognitive Development**

Cognitive development refers to the period when the child is developing intellectually and includes the development of skills such as language, speech and pre-reading skills. Piaget and Vygotsky refer to a combination of processes and factors that influence cognitive development. As human beings develop, they use more complex schemes to organize information to understand the outside world. Piaget saw this development in four discrete and qualitatively different stages (Craig 1989, p. 27). The first stage of a child's development, according to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, is called the Sensorimotor stage from birth to about 18 to 24 months. During this stage the child knows the world only by looking, grasping, mouthing and other actions.

The second stage of development is called the Preoperational stage which starts approximately from two to seven years. At this stage young children form concepts and have symbols such as language to help them to communicate. These images are limited to their personal (egocentric) and immediate experiences. Preoperational children (Craig, 1989, p. 38) have very limited, sometimes "magical" notions of cause and effect and have difficulty classifying objects or events. Equally, the child at this stage focuses on a single aspect of a problem at a time and does not consider problems in broader and holistic ways, thus failing to understand the relationship between problems.

The third stage of development is called the stage of Concrete Operations, which covers the period from seven years to about twelve years. At this stage the child begins to think logically, classifying on several dimensions, and understanding mathematical concepts, provided he/she can apply these operations to concrete objects or events. The child at this stage is viewed as having the ability to operate mentally in a systematic way on internal schemas that represent concrete experience. The last stage of development is called the Formal Operational stage where children at about age twelve enter the final

stage of cognitive development. At this stage individuals can explore logical solutions to both concrete and abstract concepts. They can systematically think about all possibilities, project into the future or recall the past, and reason by analogy (comparison) and metaphor (image) Craig (1989). Craig (1989) further states that although some educators may have perceived the four stages of child development as fixed, they are not fixed but are interrelated and children progress differently from stage to stage on an individual basis. The environment may also influence such progression and learning conditions in which a child may find him or herself. Like Piaget, Bruner (1973) in Craig (1989), also a cognitive theorist, is interested in biology and epistemology. Bruner believes that cognitive structures change qualitatively as a child develops and that the mind develops in a few major stages. According to Craig (1989), Bruner's three stages of development, the "inactive", symbolic and "iconic" stages correspond roughly to Piaget's first two stages. The inactive stage is the first and is like Piaget's sensorimotor stage in which the child learns through action. The second, the iconic stage, is akin to Piaget's early preoperational stage, in which children develop and use imagery. The third stage or symbolic stage, the child uses language to relate the real and the abstract" (p. 38).

Piaget shares with Vygotsky a similar conception of the relations between action and thought. While Piaget believed in nature and the individual's construction of reality, Vygotsky on the other hand, believed that social interactions and cultural contexts influenced child development in a holistic manner (Naanda, 2005, p. 37).

On the other hand, although Piaget's and Bruner's stages of child development have much to commend them, Piaget's stress on the different stages of development may have resulted in some underestimation of the ability of young children. Some of Piaget's tasks are regarded as complicated for some children for reasons unconnected to the child's understanding of the underlying concepts. Some tasks were too abstract and did not make sense to some children and Piaget was also criticized for having underestimated the capacities of children to learn languages or social interactions with adults and other children (Craig, 1989, p. 39).

While Piaget believed in nature and the individual's construction of reality, Vygotsky, on the other hand, believed that social interactions and cultural contexts influenced child development in a holistic manner. According to Vygotsky, cognitive development relates to the culture and contexts in which the child grows up. He further believes that development takes place through social relationships (Eloff; 2001, Green, 2001). Vygotsky's theory was based on the notion that child development was influenced by social relationships from where a child learns to construct meaning from his interactions with his parents, siblings as well as peers and other adults in their surroundings. According to Naanda (2005), Vygotsky believes that children derived meaning from what is passed on to them through dynamic socio-cultural interactions. Vygotsky also maintained that it is through language that people communicate and share information as well as develop their cultural values and consider language as a powerful means of cognitive development. One of Vygotsky's main contributions to educational theory is the concept of the "zone of proximal development". This, he referred to as the 'gap' that exists for an individual child or adult between what he is able to do alone and what he can achieve with the help from one more knowledgeable or skilled than himself. (<http://www.answers.com/topic/developmental-theory-vygotskian-theory>). This concept leads to a very different view of 'readiness' for learning to that offered by the Piagetian theory. Readiness, in Vygotskian terms, involves not only the state of the child's existing knowledge, but also his capacity to learn with help from others. The actual level refers to the child's mental functions already established at a specific level while the proximal level defines those functions that have not yet developed but are in the process of developing (Ackermann, 2001). With the word "mediator", Vygotsky refers to another child, a teacher, parent or any other adult assisting the child to move from his or her present position in order to construct new meaning.

The significance of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is that it determines the lower and upper boundaries of the zone within which teaching should be oriented. Teaching becomes more useful when it moves ahead of the child's development, leading the child to carry out activities that force him or her to rise above him or herself. According to Naanda (2005), Vygotsky examined the role of the teacher as a scaffolder

in supporting child learning development when going through the zone of proximal development (ZPD). By scaffolding, the teacher is expected to solicit and maintain the child's interest, provide tasks that are at the level of the child and increase the complexity of the tasks as the child progresses. Vygotsky believes that it is a mistake for a teacher to provide all learning to the child. He stresses the central supportive role of the teacher and peers in the process of learning in which the teacher is also seen as learning with the child.

Wood (1988) in Craig (1989), states that if we want children to learn and remember things, we must often scaffold the process for them by setting tasks, arranging materials, reminding and prompting them. Eventually, they will come to do such things for themselves and will discover how to rehearse. That is, the teacher's role in facilitating learning memory will change as a function of the child's age and capacities. Eloff (2001) has identified the following important elements to facilitate cognitive and language development:

- Reflection on appropriate curriculum goals.
- Selection of appropriate objectives for curriculum and appropriate teaching approaches.
- Teacher flexibility to adjust teaching accordingly.
- Provision of continuous opportunities so that children can practice their newly acquired skills.
- Provision of feedback that relates to performance and institutional progress.

Keeping in mind Piaget's theory of child development, that children construct their own understanding of new concepts, it is important that parents and teachers challenge the development of the child by providing him or her with a wider variety of learning experiences. Eloff (2001) refers to the important role of play in enhancing cognitive development through improving their ability to solve problems in different contexts. In cases where children experience barriers to learning, efforts should be made to provide them with early introductory mechanisms so that they develop their intellectual abilities.

It is therefore of utmost importance to provide children with a rich linguistic, cognitive and social environment. The importance of the mother tongue instruction at the stage of child development should be taken into consideration. The use of the child's home language facilitates the process of the child internalizing new concepts in his/her own language before using a second language.

What should be considered by the teacher is to put emphasis on the holistic approach to learning and development where the needs of the individual child are considered within his or her ZPD, and where more support is extended to the child with special needs in education. Piaget's views on adaptation are important to this research. The idea that individuals, like children, seek a balance or fit between the environment and their own structures of thought could imply that a teacher teaching decoding skills to children may require a lot of competencies to scaffold the kind of help required by children as they face challenges and difficulties with reading. This study makes an attempt to investigate what a teacher can do to make his/her pupils learn decoding and word attack skills.

Vygotsky has also suggested that children are actively engaged in constructing their own understanding from their experiences, which are closely associated with their socio-cultural contexts. According to Seefeldt and Barbour, (1994), children learn better by observing and participating with peers and adults in the process of learning. It is through the learning processes that they form their own assumptions and test them through social interaction. They do this by observing what has happened and reflect on their own findings as well as by asking questions and formulating their own answers. At school children meet a large group of people outside their home for the first time. They meet children of the same age, as well as different ages, with whom they spend many hours together, especially socializing with peers through play and group activity. This is where the child has to learn to socialize, to share with others and also to take turns in a number of activities. Seefeldt and Barbour (1994) further state that the different contexts in which children develop are interrelated and have an impact on one another. For example, a child who lives in extreme poverty will be affected by the broader society's stereotyping and may exhibit the effects of such stereotyping. Educators should be aware of the influence

and impact of socio-cultural contexts of child development and learning and provide support for children to express themselves.

### **2.3 Skills Required for Proficient Reading**

According to Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998, p. 3), effective reading instruction is built on a foundation that recognizes that reading ability is determined by multiple factors. Many factors that correlate with reading fail to explain it. Indeed, many experiences contribute to reading development without being prerequisite to it. It should be pointed out though, that although there are many prerequisites, none by itself is considered sufficient.

Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) maintain that adequate initial reading instruction requires that children:

- Use reading to obtain meaning from print,
- Have frequent and intensive opportunities to read,
- Be exposed to frequent, regular spelling-sound relationships,
- Learn about the nature of the alphabetic writing system, and
- Understand the structure of spoken words.

Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998, pp. 3-4) further noted that adequate progress in learning to read English or any alphabetic language beyond the initial level depends on:

- Having a working understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically,
- Sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of texts,
- Sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary to render written texts meaningful and interesting,
- Control over procedures for monitoring comprehension and repairing misunderstandings, and
- Continued interest and motivation to read for a variety of purposes.

*Phonetic awareness refers to the ability to distinguish and manipulate the individual sounds of language. The National Reading Panel (NRP)*

*(<http://pt.liverpool.k12.ny.us/reading/levelestimator/estimator.htm>) argues that the phonics method helps beginning readers understand how letters are linked to sounds (phonemes), patterns of letter-sound correspondences and spelling in English, and how to apply this knowledge when they read. The ability to read fluently is one of several critical factors necessary for reading comprehension. The aforementioned arguments could be interpreted that if a reader is not fluent, it may be difficult to remember what has been read and to relate the ideas expressed in the text to his or her background knowledge. This accuracy of reading serves as a bridge between decoding and comprehension. A critical aspect of reading comprehension is vocabulary development. It is the NRP's view that when a reader encounters an unfamiliar word in prints and decodes it to derive its spoken pronunciation, the reader understands the word if it is in the reader's spoken vocabulary. Otherwise the reader must derive the meaning of the word using another strategy such as context.*

The NRP describes comprehension as a complex cognitive process in which a reader intentionally and interactively engages with the text. Reading comprehension is heavily dependent on skilled word recognition and decoding, oral reading fluency, a well-developed vocabulary and an active engagement with the text.

Comprehension is crucial throughout learning. After a child reads a selection aloud or silently he/she should be asked to tell the teacher what happened in the story. An excellent response would naturally include answers to the 5W's and an H (Who, What, Where, When, Why and How). A very good response would have the child answering the first four or more of the questions based upon the 5W's and an H. Therefore, weaker responses would leave out three or more of these key components.

Whether one chooses to question a child or asks him/her to retell the story one observes that he/she understands these essential elements. One could turn each one of the story elements into prompt questions at the child's level of understanding. In order to determine a child's comprehension score of the story one can use the scale in Table 1:

**Table 1: The Elements Used to Test Comprehension**

<b>Retelling should Include these Story Elements:</b>	<b>Example Prompt Questions:</b>
Main Idea	What was this story all about?
Characters	Tell me about the main character(s) in this story.
Details	Could you tell me a little more about .....?
Event (s)/Problem (s)	What happened at the beginning, middle, end?
Resolution (solution to the problem(s))	So then what happened? How did the problem get solved?

(Adapted from: Read, Write, and Site: Level Estimator.)

Table 1 indicates the elements used to test the reading comprehension. Next are the stages of reading development children go through as they progress from non-readers to fluent readers.

## 2.4 Stages of Reading Development

Typically, children go through specific stages of development as they progress from non-readers to fluent readers. Learning to read is like learning to walk or talk. It is a process that cannot be rushed. Each child will move through each of the five phases of reading

development when he or she is ready. Stages 0 through stage 2 are the “Learning to read” stages of development. These are the stages where the child is just learning to read. Stages 3 through 5 are stages where the child is “reading to learn”. This is where they are reading on their own to learn material to expand their knowledge base on particular topics. While the progression from one stage to another is dependent upon mastery of each previous stage, many learners may operate in as many as two or three stages during their school years. Some first graders may be operating in stage three while some fourth graders may need some instruction in stage 2 (Chall, 1983).

According to Seymour and Evans (1986) in Funnell and Stuart (1995) there are three stages a child has to go through while learning how to read. Funnell and Stuart (1995, p. 62) note that each stage of reading builds on skills mastered in earlier stages and lack of mastery at any level can halt the process beyond that level.

The early stage of *logographic* (Funnell and Stuart, 1995), also known as pre-reading stage or early reader, is a stage where the child develops word identification skills. The process concerns the capacity to recognize and identify familiar words (whole word method or look-and-say method) is defined by Seymour and Evans (1986) in Funnell and Stuart (1995, p. 69) as a procedure for recognition of familiar words which is normally available to children from the earlier stages of their reading development. Refusal (unable to respond) and substitution (replacement of a word with one known), mostly occur in this stage. The early stage readers are just beginning to grasp the basic concepts of book and print. They are acquiring a command of the alphabet with the ability to recognize and name upper- and lowercase letters such as Aa; Bb; Cc; Ff, etc. They are also developing many phonological awareness skills, such as recognizing phonemes, syllables and rhyme. Early emergent readers are beginning to learn sound/symbol relationship – starting with consonants and short vowels – and are able to read consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words, as well as a number of high-frequency words. They need books with strong picture support, controlled text, repetitive patterns, natural language, large print, wide letter spacing, familiar concepts and limited text on a page. They read one word at a time, read by rote, select simple repetitious books, enjoy retelling stories, etc.

The second stage or *alphabetical stage* (Funnel and Stuart, 1995, p. 73), also known as decoding (discovering the meaning) of a developing reader is a procedure by which a knowledge of letter-sound associations is used to assist in the reading or writing of unfamiliar words. The child should know the letters as sounds and should be able to apply this knowledge. In reading, this might involve finding sounds for each of the letters in proper left-to-right sequence and then blending the sound to construct a pronunciation. In order to assess the availability of the alphabetic process, it is necessary to present the child with items which are genuinely unfamiliar. A standard approach is to construct made-up words called “non-words” soundings (without a blend), non-words errors and correct responses are viewed as indications of alphabetic reading.

According to Funnel and Stuart (1995, p. 74), readers at this stage develop an understanding of the alphabet, phonological awareness and early phonics. They also have command of a significant number of high-frequency words. They are developing much better grasp of comprehension strategies and word attack skills. They can recognize different types of text, particularly fiction and nonfiction, and recognize that reading has a variety of purposes. They need books with increasingly more lines of print per page, more complex sentence structure, less dependency on repetitive pattern and pictures and familiar topics, but greater depth. They can tell the main ideas, identify main characters, use context clues, and understand the meaning of. ? ! pauses and use appropriate inflection for punctuation. They read phrases, select a variety of books, and begin to feel confident when reading silently or orally.

The *phonological stage* (Funnel and Stuart, 1995, p. 76), also known as fluent stage is concerned with the speech side of the correspondence between letters and sounds. The argument here is that in order to read an alphabetic script, a child needs to understand that words can be broken down into a sequence of elementary sounds (e.g sprint = “s”+ “p”+ “r”+ “i”+ “n”+ “t”). It is therefore a procedure for division of speech into its component segments and for the retention and manipulation of these segments in memory.

At this stage, reading is more automatic, with more energy devoted to comprehension than word attack. Readers are approaching independence in comprehending a text. These readers are experiencing a greater variety of text and are able to recognize different styles and genres. Readers have successfully moved from “learning to read” to “reading to learn”. They use books with more pages and longer sentences, more text per page, richer and challenging vocabulary. They are less reliant on pictures. They are able to recognize the plot of the story, recognize the problem and solution in a story, evaluate characters actions and behaviours, use punctuation correctly of books, they are confident and enjoy sharing favorite books (<http://w.w.w.mrsmcgowan.com/reading/stages.htm>).

## *2.5 Reading Risk Indicators*

*Beginning readers have poor reading skills which cannot be associated with a deficit in visual perception which can give rise to confusion between letters like p, d, b, q, which have the same form, but different orientations. Jorm (1985, p. 42) discovered that retarded readers are frequently found to have major deficiencies in two areas of reading such as word identification, using phonological reading and comprehension of passages where the component words can be adequately identified. Jorm (1985) further indicated that reading retardation can cause reversal of sequence such as “split” being read as “spilt” and “slat” as “salt”. Jorm (1985) concludes that confusion of this sort occurs very commonly in all children when they are first beginning to read. Martin and Miller (1996, p. 51), maintain that when children learn to read they are faced with a number of tasks such as the physical characteristics of the written system, the notion of*

*the letters, words and sentences, word length and word space, lexical and grammatical forms.*

*Smith and Sensenbaugh (1992) state that a child is considered to have a reading problem if he or she has difficulty in learning to read, despite having adequate intelligence, attention, motivation, and exposure to education. They further state that sometimes a child with dyslexia may be poor at rhyming, slow to talk, or have trouble finding the "right" word he/she is speaking or writing.*

*Arnold, Goldston, Walsh, Rebonsin, Daniel, Hickman and Wood (2005), in Rockets (2003) state that children and adolescents with poor reading skills face a variety of challenges in their lives and may be at risk for emotional and behavioural problems. In some cases, behavioral or emotional problems may be triggered by the stress of difficulties in school or to learning difficulties. Some children with reading difficulties (RD) develop physical symptoms such as headaches or stomachaches in their response to the stress of academic work. Rockets (2003, p. 58) lists the following risks for reading difficulties common to almost all learners:*

- Poor letter-name and letter-sound knowledge.
- Poor spelling.
- Poor phonological/phonemic awareness (inability to rhyme, identify initial and final sounds of spoken words, or to blend and segment one-syllable spoken words).
- Lack of familiarity with basic print concepts such as print conveys meaning; print is read left to right.
- Poor knowledge of common letter-sound relationships.

- Ongoing difficulties with decoding of unfamiliar words.
- Slow, laboured, diffident reading in grade appropriate text.
- Poor reading comprehension.
- *Poor letter and word identification.*

*Rockets (2003) further maintains that specifically, children need to learn letters and sounds and how to read for meaning. They also need opportunities to practice reading with many types of books. While some children need more intensive systematic individualized instruction than others, all children need three essential elements. These are to learn letters, to learn how to sound the letters and learn how to read for meaning in order to read well and independently by the end of the third grade. Rockets (2003) is convinced that effective teaching and extra resources can make it possible for many “at-risk” children to become successful readers.*

## 2.6 Assessing Reading Skills

### 2.6.1 Why do We Need to Assess a Child?

Although a classroom may contain many children, the teacher has to be concerned with the successes and failures of individual children, rather than the class as a whole. It is therefore necessary for a teacher to understand why a child fails. The most important clues can be found in the words of the language itself for written words differ in the degree to which they tap particular reading processes. Irregular words such as “have”, “was”, “print”, “bear”, require the use of lexical processes if they are to be pronounced correctly, while regular words such as “those”, “but”, “face”, may be read by either lexical or sub lexical means, and nonwords require the use of sublexical procedures

(Goulandris and Snowling (1991) in Funnell and Stuart (1995, p. 93). There are three distinctive reading skills which contribute to competent reading: the ability to recognize familiar written words, the ability to use phonic skills to pronounce unfamiliar words and the ability to understand what is being read. Good readers can shift between alternative strategies as needed, so that reading progresses as efficiently as possible. The three skills are independent of each other.

In reading, word recognition occurs when a written word is recognized as a familiar word and pronounced correctly regardless of whether it appears in isolation or embedded in text. Moreover, many teachers have been led to believe that reading words out of context is an unnecessary skill and that word recognition is of no consequence. This view according to Goulandris and Snowling (1991) in Funnell and Stuart (1995, p.93) is both misleading and inaccurate. Word recognition or lexical processing is a vitally important component of skilled learners and the inability to learn to recognize written words accurately and automatically needs to be evaluated and the specific problems documented. Therefore, when assessing reading it is important to examine an individual's ability to read both text and single words presented out of context so that linguistic and contextual cues are no longer available to assist word recognition.

Single word reading can initially be assessed using a single word standardized test consisting of a list of words graded in order of difficulty. Written words can be categorized as regular or irregular according to the predictability of their spelling. Some words can be sounded out and spelled just as they sound. Such words are often referred to as regular words since their pronunciation conforms to the most common mapping between letters and sounds, e.g. "ham", "piglet", "carpenter". In contrast, irregular words incorporate unusual spellings which learners are unlikely to recognize unless they have previously encountered the item and linked it to the word's meaning and correct pronunciation. In order to read an irregular word correctly, a reader has to be familiar with the word and has to have formed a word recognition unit for its usual spelling. Regular words can be read using either the lexical route (whole word recognition) or the sub-lexical route (decoding), whereas irregular words can only be read using a lexical

route. Regular words can therefore be used to examine a child's ability, to make use of alphabetic information while instant/sight words (words that are recognized instantly without hesitation or further analysis) and irregular words can be used to assess word recognition. Goulandris and Snowling (1991) further note that it is often difficult to determine whether the reader is using word recognition or decoding skills when reading the word; therefore, more precise ways of assessing decoding are needed. Tasks such as non-word reading and a comparison of regular and irregular words are more informative measures of decoding ability. Non-words are meaningless letter strings which usually resemble English words and conform to the spelling structure of English. Often these words are constructed by altering only one letter or a real word, i.e. a word such as "house" can be changed to "vouse" or "fouse" and "soldier" to "koldier", etc. Non-word reading texts enable us to obtain a more accurate measure of a reader's phonic decoding ability because they can only be read using the sub-lexical route (Funnell and Stuart, 1995, p. 108). In order to find out the level at which the learner can read independently with understanding, reading passages with questions based on them are recommended.

### **2.6.2 Grading Children as Readers**

The first step in achieving this ambition is to hear the child read and then grade him or her accordingly. The teacher will have to observe the type of errors made. The patterns of responses to be taken into consideration while a child reads include: Refusals (unable to respond), addition, (add another word), substitution (replace a word with another one), omission and reversal (avoid reading next word) and repetition (repeating the same word).

Reading should form an integral part of all language work and should be related to speaking, listening and writing. Once a child has learnt a few words he or she should be encouraged to write the words in controlled sentences and in free writing. In reading, the teacher should observe three stages: The pre-concrete stage is when the child guesses by story and picture, when he or she can't handle the skills of reading and comprehending together. The second stage follows when a child uses individual letters as clues and at

this stage may say “John” whenever he or she sees a “J”. Here he/she must be reminded of the sound or symbol relationship. The third stage is voice pointing already quoted where the child is matching a word already heard with the word he/she has read. Having observed these stages the teacher should go on giving the child practice in reading aloud and to him/herself. Once contact is established, the teacher can quite easily determine the stage reached by the child by selecting words to be read by the child. While reading, the teacher calculates percentages of words recognized and asks questions to determine comprehension. The stages to be reached by the child are:

The independent stage: whereby a child can do silent reading and assignment work with little help.

The instructional stage: at this stage the child is able to grasp new words and ideas with some prompting, e.g. consonant given by the teacher. At this stage three quarters of ideas are understood.

The frustration stage: this is the level at which the child needs phonics and the look-say method. The child needs to be given easier books, because the child’s reading skills break down and fluency disappears. There are numerous errors in word recognition and signs of emotional tension and discomfort become evident (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998, p. 213).

In order to assess word recognition and reading comprehension of a child, different tests can be used, starting with the alphabetic process. This is the procedure by which knowledge of letter-sound associations is used to assist in the reading or writing of unfamiliar words. Funnell and Stuart (1995, p. 73) note that one essential requirement is that the children should know the letters and their sounds and they should be able to apply this knowledge. This might involve finding the sounds for each of the letters in proper left to right sequence and then blending the sounds to construct a pronunciation. For spelling, it could involve breaking a word up into its elementary sounds and then selecting and writing a letter corresponding to each sound. It is necessary to present the

children with unfamiliar items by constructing made-up words called non-words in order to assess the availability of the alphabet process.

## **2.7 The Factors which Contribute to English as a Second Language Reading Difficulties among the Primary School Learners**

Reading problems are found among every age group and in every primary school classroom, although some children are at greater risk of reading difficulties than others. How and why precisely this happens has not been fully understood (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998). According to Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998), the factors that contribute to these reading difficulties include biological deficits that make the processing of sound-symbol relationship difficult, factors within the individual, factors in the home, social and cultural environments and factors in the school environments such as school curriculum and teaching methods.

### **2.7.1 Biological Deficits**

Shaywitz (1996, in Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998, p. 24) asserts that all reading difficulties, whatever their primary etiology, must express themselves through alterations of the brain systems responsible for word identification and comprehension. He further states that even in disadvantaged or other high-risk populations, many children do learn to read, some easily and others with great difficulty. Cognitive studies of reading have identified phonological processing as crucial to skillful reading, and so it seems logical to suspect that poor readers may have phonological processing problems. Shaywitz (1996) further states that one line of research has looked at phonological processing problems that can be attributed to the underdevelopment or disruption of specific brain systems.

Genetic factors have also been implicated in some reading disabilities, as revealed in the studies both of family occurrence by Pennington (1989) and of twins by Olson (1994) in Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998, p. 24). Pennington (1989) and Olson (1994) in Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) further assert that differences in brain function and behaviour

associated with reading difficulty may arise from environmental and or genetic factors. According to Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998, p. 25) , “It is important to emphasise that evidence for genetic influence and anomalous brain development does not mean that a child is condemned to failure in reading.” Brain and behavioural development are always based on the interaction between genetic and environmental influences. They further explain that the genetic and neurobiological evidence does suggest why learning to read may be particularly difficult for some children and why they may require extraordinary instructional support in reading and related phonological processes.

Steinberg (1993) in Kuutondokwa (2003) mentions some of the neural pathways that are considered to be involved in the processing of spoken language in reading. He says that the written form is first received by the visual cortex, and then transmitted via the angular gyrus to the Wernicke’s area. This is where it is thought to be associated with auditory representation. When the word is read, the information goes from the eyes to the visual area of the brain. Readers use their knowledge of the grammar of the ordinary language, both to understand what they read and to produce what to write. The hearing-impaired person’s knowledge of speech-based language is usually limited, therefore the ability of that person to acquire reading skills based on that knowledge is also similarly limited to interpret written language, since in learning to read one does not need to acquire the grammar of the language.

### **2.7.2 Factors within the Individual**

Martin and Miller (1996), describe internal factors which can influence the reading skills in children who are beginning to read such as maturation, development of their speech and language, vision and hand-motor skills. Factors such as teaching methods and teaching materials are external factors which can influence reading among learners. Aunola, Nurmi, Pekka, Lekanen and Puttonen (2002, p. 213) list a number of determinants of good reading performance such as parental involvement in the children’s academic development, which is of vital importance, because it contributes to a sense of purpose and relevance. Martin and Miller (1996) conclude that parents’ positive beliefs

and high expectations about their children's competencies and school abilities have been shown to be associated with their children's high achievement at school.

Problems within the individual have been a focus of research for over 100 years (Richek, Caldewell, Hennings and Lerner (1996). Many of the researchers have speculated that reading difficulties were associated with "neurological factors" – a disorder of the mind caused by accidents that have involved damage to the brain. This includes visual-motor-problems, delayed speech, a history of reading disability in one's family and inability to process information (Perfetti, 1985). Problems within the individual such as health and emotional problems tend to increase when students live in difficult environments. Gilger, Pennington and De Fries (1991) maintain that if a child is diagnosed with a reading difficulty, there is a higher than normal probability that other family members will also have difficulties with reading. The home, social and cultural environments in which children grow can also influence their ability to read.

### **2.7.3 Factors in the Home, Social and Cultural Environments**

Richek, et al. (1996) indicate that children who are particularly likely to have difficulties with learning to read in the primary grades, are those who begin school with less prior knowledge and skills in relevant domains. This includes a lack in general verbal ability, a lack in ability to attend to the sounds of language as distinct from its meaning and a lack in a familiarity with the basic purposes and mechanisms of reading and letter knowledge. Richek et al. (1996) further state that some children have difficulties learning to read because they have not had early experiences that lead to an understanding of what reading is all about (a way of deriving meaning from a text). When they are young these children often lack knowledge of letters and they sense that letters make sounds that map onto the spoken language they have already acquired. Other children have difficulties that appear to be brain based. This means that the sources of their difficulties are much more difficult to eliminate with regular educational interventions.

The home, social and cultural environments in which children grow can also influence their ability to read. Homes that are plagued with poverty and family instability and neighbourhoods where violence is common, produce children who are “at risk” of school failure. The combinations of individual and environmental causes produce an increased risk for reading difficulties. Children who are hungry or homeless have little energy to focus on school. Their overburdened, often undereducated parents and guardians may lack the time and skills to nurture literacy by sharing books with them, encouraging them to do homework or communicating with their teachers. According to Richek et al. (1996) the home environment has increasingly become a factor in reading difficulties of children.

Children who grow up in a healthy and stimulating learning environment will have an advantage over those who come from less stimulating conditions. Reading problems should be identified so that they do not result into a progressive chain of problems that eventually become negative habits over years and teachers should help learners to overcome learning problems. Wide reading will help all learners, but it will largely depend upon library facilities at the school.

One factor mentioned by Jacob and Jordan (1987) in Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998, p. 29), is that of culture differences. That is, the mismatch between the schools and the families in defining literacy, in teaching practice and in defining roles for parents versus teachers. These differences, according to Jacob and Jordan (1987) in Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998), can create obstacles to children’s learning to read in school. Ogbu (1974; 1982) also in Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998, p. 29) notes that primary cultural differences matter far less than “secondary cultural discontinuities”, such as low motivation and low educational aspirations that are the result of discrimination and limited social and economic opportunities for certain minority groups.

#### **2.7.4 Factors in the School Environment**

Allington and Stanovich (1994) indicate that some school practices can contribute to reading problems. It is possible that teachers, whose job is to help the children, can actually be doing some things that are harmful. They give an example of a teacher who had entirely given up teaching a child to read. They explain that the teacher simply read everything to the child. When other children had reading time, that child was expected to sit quietly and do nothing. Although such dramatic lack of reading instruction is rare, school instruction often does little to help children with reading problems. In an intensive study of one school, Juel (1994) found that a child who is a poor reader in Grade 1 has an 88% chance of being a poor reader in Grade 4. One important reason why school instruction often is ineffective in helping to solve reading difficulties is that learners with reading difficulties do not read much in school. Juel (1994) further states that unskilled readers spend less time reading than do average learners, and that low-achieving learners read only a third as many words as average learners. In short, learners with reading difficulties are not practicing enough to improve their reading abilities. With little reading they make little progress. According to Juel (1994), some children have a disability that makes reading difficult to master. Others come to school without the literacy experiences they need to become readers. Some children struggle because they have received poor or inadequate reading instruction. When these and other risk factors are identified early, many children's reading difficulties can be prevented.

### **2.7.5 School Curriculum and Teaching Methods**

Children usually get ready to read before the initiation of formal instruction. They bring literacy to school, literacy that has emerged through the influence of the family and the community during early years. They are aware of print. They can read common signs and labels and can write their names (Lerner, 2000). As the learners are introduced to formal education, the instruction becomes systematic and explicit. Teachers and learners start to use different quality and range of books in the teaching and learning of reading in English as a Second Language. Hengari (2007, p. 3) mentions that these teachers and learners are indeed confronted with the issue of language differences as the medium of instruction is

not their primary language. Both teachers and learners may have limited English proficiency and as a result have difficulty understanding and using this language.

Sometimes the instructional deficiency can be traced to a lack of an appropriate curriculum, although Silver and Hagin (2002), concluded that there is no specific curriculum that can be used to teach reading to learners experiencing reading problems. The researcher tends to agree with Silver and Hagin (2002) when they state that reading problems which are later diagnosed as learning disabilities result from children being asked to perform at educational levels for which they are not ready developmentally.

Teachers who are poorly trained in effective methods for teaching beginning readers, the lack of textbooks and other reading materials, noisy and crowded classrooms and so on, are some of the factors contributing to reading problems among the learners. It is regrettable (Kozol, 1991; Natriello, McDill and Pallas, 1990) that schools with these detrimental characteristics continue to exist. These schools often exist in low-income areas, where resources for children's out-of-school learning materials are limited. As a result the effect can be very detrimental to students' chances of becoming skilled readers.

Churton and Klein (1997, p. 142) reported, "Pre-schools were an effective way to prepare impoverished children for schools." Churton and Klein (1997) further noted that the possible cause of poor reading could be attributed to the lack of participation in school programme amongst the children. Many children at risk of reading difficulties enter school with little or no phonological awareness.

According to Jacob and Jordan (1987) in Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998), the use of non-standard varieties of English or limited proficiency in the English language would put children with limited English proficiency at a disadvantage. This is true in most schools in Namibia. These children might not have reading difficulties at all, if they were taught in a language they are proficient in. Therefore, cultural differences can create obstacles to children's learning to read in school. In this regard, the researcher agrees with Jacob and Jordan (1987) in Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) and the Ministry of Basic Education,

Sport and Culture (MBESC, 2003, p. 66), that the home - or a local language should be the medium of instruction in Grades 1 – 3 with English only as a subject.

Hayland (1995, p. 109), states that teachers can do a lot to steer students towards efficient independent reading by making reading tasks more explicit and helping them to concentrate on their reading for a specific purpose. The research work done by Abdullah (1983) concluded that the reading teacher should not be content with merely increasing the size of learners' vocabulary through activities or making learners memorise from vocabulary lists but he/she should adopt some activities that will help reinforce reading to facilitate automatic lexical access. This is the same view held by Hayland (1995, p. 109), who says that teachers should create an awareness of reading flexibilities in their learners and that teachers should bear the purpose of their teaching in mind in order to improve the skills that will best help their students in future.

Abdullah (1983, p. 112) recommends the use of a thematic approach in the teaching of reading. This is an approach that can include the four main skills of the language into one lesson or period. Reading, listening, writing and speaking should be integrated in one lesson to ensure lexical repetition and reinforcement.

The researcher concurs with Ghani (1993) that most teachers might have greater problems in finding the correct level of reading materials for their learners from their environment. Ghani (1993) advises that teachers should strike a balance between content and language when preparing reading materials for their learners. This researcher, (Ghani, 1993) has observed that children in Lower Primary School in Namibia are often asked to read high-level reading comprehension before being able to read materials at the lower primary level. Taylor, Harris and Pearson (1988, p. 123) indicated that most elementary teachers spent too much time helping learners to complete written assignments and have problems to apply the word recognition skills to the reading of connected text. Taylor, Harris and Pearson (1988) concluded that low-achieving readers have less knowledge about symbols and sound correspondence particularly as pertaining to vowels.

Vacca and Vacca (1986, in Kuutondokwa, 2003, p. 10), state that reading skills cannot be taught entirely as a separate subject at any level of instruction, because readers make meaning by connecting new knowledge to the knowledge they already possess. One of the most common ways of increasing reading speed is to give learners passages to read and to ask them to time themselves. Kuutondokwa (2003) further maintains that teachers can contribute to reading maturity of learners within the context of subject matter instruction. Learners would never read efficiently unless they can adapt their reading speed and techniques to their aims when reading. With regard to the teaching of reading to primary grade learners, Taylor, Harris and Pearson (1988, p. 124) note that learners who lack sufficient basic sight words would benefit from meaningful drill on certain high frequency words until they know them instantly as sight words.

Witzel and Mercer (2003, in Kuutondokwa, 2003) state that teachers should use reward to reinforce a desired behaviour and if students feel that the reason for reward was a different behaviour, the teacher should not be pleased with the results. Students should be allowed to read at their own pace inside and outside the classrooms. They should be allowed to choose when and where to read and teachers should act as role models for their learners. Reading a large amount of easy reading materials has a vital role to play in learning to read fluently also helps to wean students away from the word-by-word processing of the text and encourages learners to go for the general meaning of what they read.

Day and Bamford (2000, p. 14) cited Nation (n.d.) as saying, “Successful reading experiences can counter the feeling of failure; therefore, the most important thing is that teachers should prepare as many reading materials as possible for their learners which learners will find easy to read. Teachers can use silent reading as a tool to improve their learners’ reading skills by preparing reading materials which learners will read and then report on to their teachers and fellow learners.” According to Rao (1999) it is true that one of the important components of reading is the ability of the teacher to select the reading materials which are appropriate for specific situations.

The main method of preventing reading problems is excellent instruction. Effective reading instruction is built on a foundation that recognizes that reading ability is determined by multiple factors. Many factors and experiences contribute to reading development and no one factor or experience by itself is considered sufficient (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998). Adequate initial reading instruction requires that children use reading to obtain meaning from print, have frequent and intensive opportunities to read, be exposed to frequent and regular spelling and sound relationships, learn about the nature of the alphabetical writing system and understand the structure of spoken words. Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) further note that adequate progress in learning to read English or any alphabetic language depends on having a working understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically, sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of texts, sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary to render written texts meaningful and interesting.

Excellent instruction in the primary grades requires teachers who are well prepared, highly knowledgeable, and receive ongoing support. Excellent instruction (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998) may be possible only if schools are organized optimally, support services function adequately and if children's home languages are taken into account in designing instruction. Every child should be provided with full and equal educational opportunities, regardless of the background, education and/or income of the child's parents (Juel, 1994). Preparing to teach children reading in today's schools is a big responsibility. The use of certain materials, the covering of curricula materials, meeting individual learner's needs, ensuring all children are literate and fostering for independent learning is certainly not for poorly prepared teachers (Heilmann, Blair and Rupley, 1981). Rather, teachers must be knowledgeable and sensitive people to whom parents entrust their children for many hours each day of the school year. Heilmann et al. (1981), further note that the effectiveness of a teacher will have a direct relationship on the knowledge of the English language and the development of a child.

Teachers should bear in mind that the second and third grades are critical school years for ensuring that all learners make the transition, by building their capacity to comprehend more difficult and more valid texts. By the time learners enter Grade 4, it is imperative that their ability to read be sufficiently well developed. If not, it will impede their capacity to comprehend, analyze, critique, abstract and reflect on the text to adequately profit from the learning opportunities ahead (Heilmann, et al. 1981).

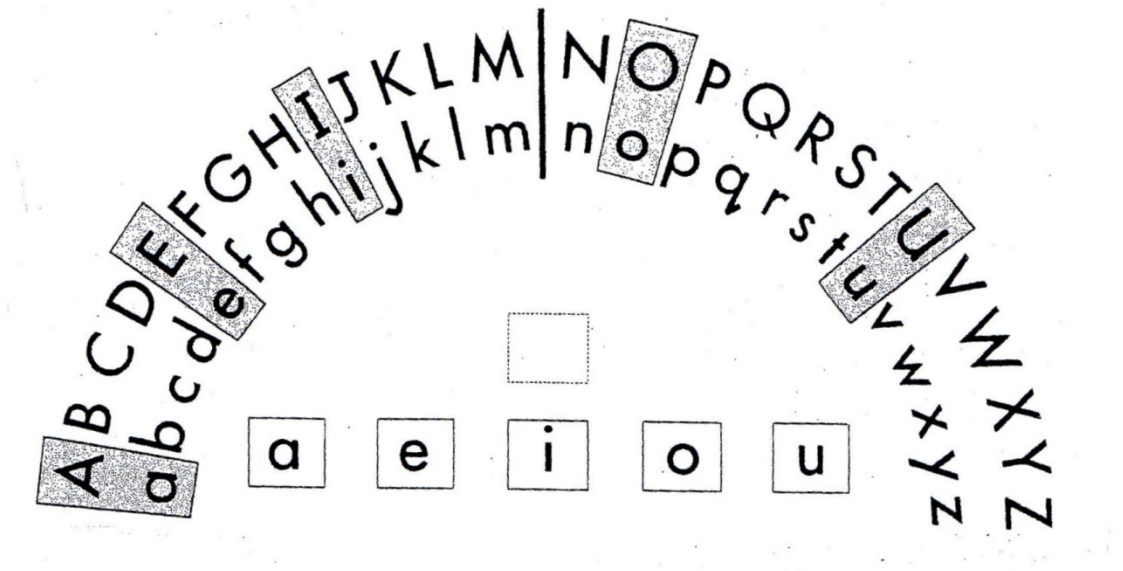
According to Funnell and Stuart (1995), it is difficult to know for certain what it is about the method a particular teacher practices that leads to its success. A variety of approaches may be used, some of which may be more helpful than others. The way in which a method is used may be more important than the method itself. Some teachers may simply be more encouraging than others and the method used may be unimportant, meaning that the approach can be more helpful than the method itself.

Walton (1998, p. 3), states that it is reasonable to use a method of teaching reading and spelling based on the sounds of our speech which is the Phonic Method. This is when a teacher teaches the letter sound other than the letter name for example, letter “s”. The letter’s name is read as “es” while it sounds as “sss”. Most children learn to read and write by whatever method a school uses, but those who have difficulty with reading and spelling learn best when the Phonic Method of teaching is used.

Alphabet pictures and letter cards are useful. For young pupils it is better to make two sets of small cards, one showing the letters of the alphabet, and the other with pictures to match the letters. Each time a teacher teaches a sound, a picture card and a matching letter card should be introduced. The researcher agrees with Snow, et al., (1998) that it is very important for a teacher to check that the names of the pictured objects really do start with the correct sound. A teacher should not try to teach all twenty-six letters of the alphabet straight away. A teacher should also avoid introducing letters with nearly the same sound one after the other, for example “e” and ” i” to avoid confusion.

Walton (1998) maintains that one of the best ways of teaching reading is to link children's reading to 'real life' as soon as possible. This can be done by using a magazine or a newspaper and asking a child to look at the headlines and see if he can find particular words like "the", "at", "on", "big", "his", etc., an activity called "Making a Mess" of the Newspapers (Walton, 1998, p. 21).

Walton (1998) emphasizes the importance of arranging the letters of the alphabet in a rainbow shape and feels that it helps the learners to learn the order of letters. A teacher has to point out that letters "M and N" are in the middle of the alphabet. In order to stress the vowels, they should be written in the box or being highlighted (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. The Alphabet in a Rainbow Shape. (Adapted from Walton, 1998, p. 106)**

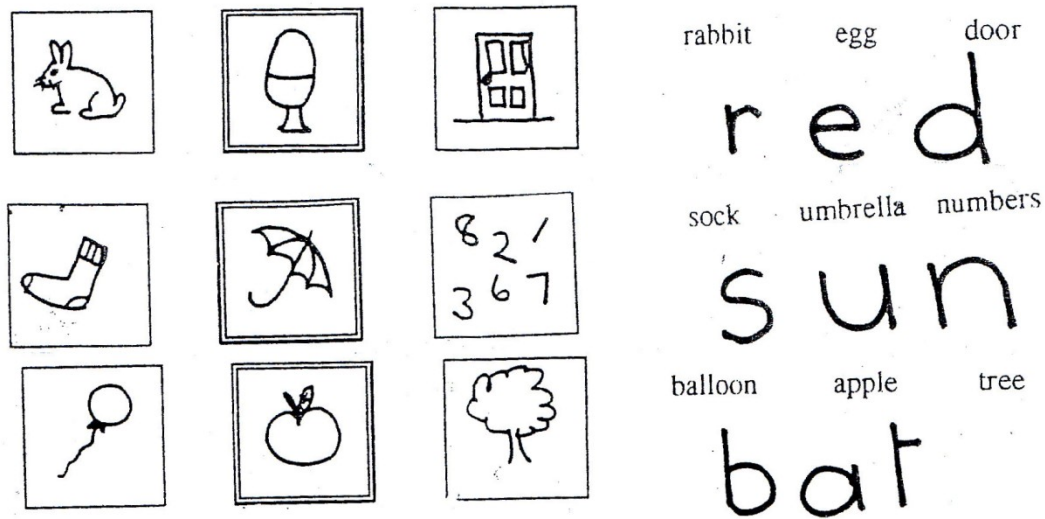
Walton (1998, pp. 4-6) introduced many different useful methods of teaching reading, such as:

- a) ***Look and Say Method***: where a teacher uses flash cards with a single word written on it. A teacher puts the cards on the table one at a time, on top of each other as fast as he thinks is reasonable for that particular learner to read them.
- b) ***The Real Books Method***: This method, according to Walton (1998), requires children to have access to “real books” as opposed to books in a reading scheme with carefully controlled vocabulary and short sentences. Children who have great difficulty in reading need books with clear pictures or diagrams which can convey information without relying on reading skills.
- c) ***Shared Reading***: This method, according to Walton (1998), is when a teacher always listens to a child reading, supports and encourages him/her when necessary. A teacher can also use what is called “Paired Reading” – when he/she and a child read the words together but a teacher has to slow down his/her speed slightly to suit the child.
- d) ***Motivation***: The best way of encouraging a child to read is to read aloud to him/her so that he/she associates reading with pleasure. By reading to him/her, a teacher is showing the child how useful it is being able to read.

At least, a teacher should be prepared to read what a child wants to hear. A teacher and a child can also discuss what they have been reading to check that the child understood it. At the same time a teacher can show the child the usefulness of writing, not just for school work, but in everyday life. A teacher can, for example, let a child write short notes, even if the spelling is not perfect. A child can jot down telephone messages, sending birthday or Christmas cards or making shopping lists (Snow, et al., 1998).

Young children like to draw pictures. According to Funnel and Stuart (1995), children should be allowed to draw picture sentences such as, “The dog is fat.” Children draw the

picture showing what the sentence is about. Sometimes young pupils like to play other games. A teacher should let them play a game like “Find the Hidden Word.” A teacher can choose three of the picture cards, so that when the child writes down the initial letters of the pictures, or chooses the matching letter cards, he/she will discover the hidden word (See Fig 2).



**Figure 2. Picture Cards. (Adapted from Walton, 1998, p .21)**

One of the recommendable approaches to teaching reading is the language experience approach where a teacher can use the learners’ own words to help them to read. For example: A learner may draw a picture of Dad in the car. Then a teacher would write underneath the drawing “Dad is in the car”. The teacher can collect all the learners’ drawing and make them into a book for them to read and read again. This method supports the children’s concept development and vocabulary growth while offering many opportunities for meaningful reading and writing activities through the use of personal experience and oral language (<http://teachingtreasures.com.au/homeschool/reading-methods/language-experience-app...>)

The context support method is also useful to teach reading. Teachers should choose books which really interest the learners. For example, if boys like cars, choose a book with pictures and simple words about cars. Or, if girls like dolls, a teacher should try to get books with doll pictures and simple words about dolls. It will encourage enthusiasm because they are actually looking at something they can relate to.

The following teaching approaches are recommended by Lerner (2000, p. 399) to help learners who have decoding difficulties:

Children need direct instruction in word recognition, decoding and phonics to make the relationship between printed letters and sounds explicitly.

- Phonics - Children who are taught phonics directly and systematically in the early grades receive higher scores on reading achievement test than children who do not receive this training.
- Sight words - These are words that are recognized instantly, without hesitation or further analysis. Fluent reading requires that most of the words in a selection be sight words.
- Context Clues - Help a learner recognize a word through the meaning or context of a sentence or a paragraph in which the word appears.
- Structural Analysis - Is the recognition of words through the analysis of meaningful word units such as (1) prefix (in-, pre-, un-); (2) suffix (-ing, -ed, -er); (3) root words (-play- in replying); (4) compound words (cow + boy in cowboy). A learner may recognize structural elements of a word such as (prefix “re-“and the suffix “-tion” in repetition). These clues, combined with the context of the sentence, can help the learner to recognize the word (Lerner, 2000, p. 404).

Learners should also be encouraged to use all of the word recognition clues (phonics, sight words, context clues and structural analysis) when an unknown word stops the reading process. Learners need practice in each of these word recognition clues to achieve independence and flexibility and to gain fluency. The learners need to learn

strategies that will help them become active readers who understand the text (Richeck et al., 1996). Learners must develop fluency to make the bridge from word recognition to reading comprehension. Learners with reading difficulties needed to be empowered by the teachers. Teachers must use strategies to make reading an enjoyable, positive experience.

The researcher fully agrees with all the ways and methods recommended in the literature reviewed so far as useful when teaching reading especially to learners with reading difficulties. Nonetheless, when implementing them, lots of praise is needed when a child succeeds, as well as assistance, encouragement and sympathy when a child does not.

## **2.8 Aspects within the English Structure that Learners Experience most Reading Difficulties with**

An adequate progress in learning to read English, or any other alphabetic language beyond the initial levels, depends on having working understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically and sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of texts. According to Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998, p. 4), there are three potential stumbling blocks that are known to throw children off course on the journey to skilled reading.

The first obstacle: is difficulty in understanding and using the alphabetic principle. That is the idea that written spellings systematically represent spoken words. It is hard to comprehend connected text if word recognition is inaccurate or laborious. The second obstacle: is a failure to transfer the comprehension skills of spoken language to reading and to acquire new strategies that may be specifically needed for reading. The third obstacle to reading: is the absence or loss of an initial motivation to read or failure to develop a mature appreciation of the rewards of reading. However, we do not know whether the grade 3 learners in Namibia have the same obstacles. This is what this research intends to investigate.

Learning to read poses real challenges, even to children who will eventually become good readers. Furthermore, although every writing system has its own complexities, English presents a relatively special challenge, even among alphabetic language speakers (Daniels and Bright (1996) in Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998)). An alphabetic system poses a challenge to the beginning reader, because the units represented graphically by letters of the alphabet are meaningless and phonologically abstract. For example, the word “but”. There are three sounds represented by three letters in that word, but each sound alone does not refer to anything and only the middle sound can really be pronounced in isolation.

On the other hand, the sounds of the letters are different from their names as noted by Walton (1998). Walton (1998, p. 14) maintains that the teacher should try to make learners understand that the sounds of letters are not the same as their names. For example, the sound of the first letter of “fat” is like air escaping from a puncture, whereas its name is pronounced as “eff”. Of course, eventually, children need to know both, but in early stages, the names of letters do not help with reading and spelling. What is meant here is that if one says that “cat” is spelt “see ay tea”, it is impossible to run “see-ay-tea” together and hear anything that sounds like “cat”. Some of the illustrations use inappropriate pictures if one is trying to teach a child the sounds of the letters. For example “giraffe” is not good for the letter “g”, but “gorilla” is fine. The sound of the letter “g” in “giraffe” is like the “j” in “jam”, whereas the sound of the “g” in “gorilla” is like the “g” in “garden” (1998, p.14).

Daniels and Bright (1996) in Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) note that the deep orthography – a method of representing spoken language by letters and spelling in English is further complicated by the retention of many historical spellings, despite changes in pronunciation that make the spelling hard to understand. For example, the “gh” in “might” and “neighborhood”, represents a consonant that has long since disappeared from spoken English. Another example is the “ph” in “morphology” and “philosophy” useful in signaling the Greek etymology of those words, but represents a complicated pattern of sound-symbol correspondences that have been abandoned in other

languages such as Spanish, and many other languages. In short, English can present a challenge for a learner who expects to find each letter always linked to just one sound. However the researcher does not know if this could be the case with the Namibian Orthography.

Gooyesen (1998) in Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998), indicates that reading is an incredible job, and what is worse is that reading English is not a simple matter of learning what sounds go with which letters or group of letters. Gooyesen further states that some languages are straight forward such as the Spanish and the Japanese. The Spanish spell all the words as they sound. Again, when learning the principles of a syllabic system like Japanese “katakana” is straightforward, since the units represented – syllables – are pronounceable and psychologically real, even to young children. Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) state that in English, rather than preserving one letter-to-one-sound correspondence, one preserves the spelling even if that means a particular letter spells several different sounds. For example, the last letter pronounced “k” in written word “electric” represents quite a different sound in the word “electricity” and “electrician”. The second letter pronounced “o” in the written word “monster” represents a different sound in the word “mother”, indicating the morphological relation among the words but making the sound – symbol relationship more difficult to understand. In the following words; “private/motivate”, “put/cut”; “unit/umbrella”; “promise/advise”; “rule/cute”, the same letters represent quite different sounds. Gooyesen (1998), in Snow et al. (1998) notes that three out of every 100 British school children have difficulties in learning to read English even though English is their mother tongue. How much more with learners whose mother tongue is not English?

## **2.9 Strategies that could be Used to Address Reading Difficulties among School Learners**

According to Richek et al. (1996), the purpose of reading is comprehension. Good readers know that the purpose of reading is to understand, enjoy and learn from reading material. In contrast, learners with reading problems often think that reading means

recognizing words. Some feel that once they read all of the words orally, they are finished! These learners can be assisted by always asking them for comprehension responses after they have read the material. They can be asked to answer questions based on the texts or story telling. Silent reading needs to be encouraged. Learners who read only orally come to think of reading as a performance. Silent reading helps them to understand that reading is a personal, meaningfully focused activity. Teachers can use several strategies to encourage active yet accurate reading. Teachers should make learners interested in the material before they begin reading by telling them what is good or exciting about the topic or story.

Although most children begin school with positive attitudes and expectations for success (Snow, Burn and Griffin, 1998) state that by the end of the primary grades and increasingly thereafter, some children become disillusioned. The majority of reading problems faced by today's adolescents and adults are the result of problems that might have been avoided or resolved in their early childhood years. It is imperative that steps be taken to ensure that children overcome these obstacles during the primary grades. An important primary step toward preventing reading difficulties is to reduce the number of children who enter school with inadequate literacy-related knowledge and skills. This, according to Richek et al. (1996), would serve to reduce considerably the magnitude of problems currently facing schools. Schools with larger numbers of children at risk of reading difficulties need rich resources, manageable class sizes and student teacher ratios, high quality instrumental materials in sufficient quantities, good school libraries and pleasant physical facilities. Children with limited proficiency in English, those with hearing impairments, preschool language impairments, and those whose parents had difficulty learning to read are particularly at risk at arriving at school with weaknesses in these areas and thus falling behind from the outset. Throughout the early grades, time, materials and resources should be provided with two goals in mind; to support daily independent reading of selected texts that are of particular interest for the individual learner and beneath the individual learner's frustration level, to consolidate the learner's capacity for independent reading, and thirdly, to support daily assisted or supported

reading of texts that are slightly more difficult in working or in linguistic, rhetorical or conceptual structure in order to promote advances in the learner's capabilities.

Throughout the early grades, schools should promote independent reading outside school by such means as daily at-home reading assignments and expectations, encouraging parental involvement, and by working with community groups, including public librarians, who share this goal (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998). A lack of reading skills results into poor performance in other subjects too. Experience has shown that those who fail in school usually have failed first in reading. There is a saying, "If the first button on a man's coat is wrongly buttoned, all the rest are certain to be crooked," (Richek et al., 1996, p. 113). Reading is that first button in the garment of education.

Although literature has identified a number of factors that can affect reading among children, we do not know if the same would apply to Grade 3 learners in the Khomas Education Region of Namibia and Namutuni Primary School, in particular. This is what this study intends to investigate.

## **SUMMARY**

Reading English has powerful implications relating to teaching and learning in Namibia. If one cannot read, one cannot learn and that can impede teaching. There is therefore a need to tackle English as a Second Language reading difficulties among the primary school learners to enhance learner performance in Namibian schools.

Various researches done on reading difficulties were described in this chapter. The next chapter deals with the methodology of the research.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

As pointed out in the previous chapters, the purpose of this study was to investigate the reading difficulties in English Second Language of Grade 3 learners in one Primary School in the Khomas Education Region. This chapter discusses the methodology that was used to carry out the study. It highlights the research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, data collection and data analysis procedures that were used to gather information from the participants. The research investigated the factors that contribute to English Second Language reading difficulties that Grade 3 learners experience. It also investigated the aspects within the English structure that learners in Grade 3 the most difficulties with.

The investigation was a descriptive case-study of one primary school and it specifically focused on Grade 3 classes using English as a Second Language. The researcher used the case study approach, because according to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990) the case study attempts to describe the subjects' entire range of behaviours and the relationships of the behaviours to the subject's history and environment. The case study also made the investigator examine an individual unit in depth and observe the characteristics of an individual unit.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

A research design is a plan or blueprint of how one proposes to do the research (Babbie, 1992). It is the research design that determines the research methods and procedures to be applied as determined by the nature of the research problem. Research design is the overall research methodology such as qualitative, quantitative, case study or a

combination of these. Research design relates to the general approach adopted in executing the study. The researcher has to specify the type of the design followed in the study (Oyedele, 2003).

This study adopted both the qualitative and the quantitative research approaches. The qualitative research approach relies on the collection of non-numerical data such as words and pictures. The qualitative research design was appropriate for this study because the data collected were in the form of words and behaviours as they occur in the natural environment (Gay, 1998; Johnson and Christensen, 2004 and Shank, 2006). Furthermore, the qualitative approach based on the interpretative theory was chosen because it allowed the researcher to understand the situation from an insider's perspective. According to Sewell (2001) cited by De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2005), a study done from an interpretative paradigm attempts to understand the world from the participants' point of view and to unfold the meaning of people's experiences. Moreover, interpretative research is concerned with meaning and it seeks to understand members' definitions and understanding of the situations. It seeks to produce descriptive analysis that emphasizes deep interpretative understanding of social phenomena.

The qualitative research design implied the use of methods such as interviews and tests for collecting and analyzing data. It allowed the researcher to interpret the results in different ways. Specifically, the case study was used for executing this study. The case study was appropriate for this study because it is an in-depth investigation of an individual, group of individuals, school, community or institution. The case study allowed the researcher to learn as much as possible about the population or phenomenon under investigation and also helped the researcher to organize data for the purpose of reviewing the social reality in the classroom (Babbie, 1992; Shank, 2006). The case study approach also helped the researcher to address the research objectives (Johnson and Christensen, 2004; Shank, 2006).

The quantitative approach, based on the positivist theory, sometimes also called the statistical studies (Oyedele 2003), is more appropriate for gathering quantitative

information. Oyedele (2003) further states that through statistics some facts are expressed more meaningfully in number than they could otherwise be stated. The combination of qualitative and quantitative research designs implies the use of methods such as interviews (qualitative) and tests (quantitative) for collecting and analyzing data allowed the researcher to interpret the results in different ways. Furthermore, these two methods, the qualitative and the quantitative approaches, allowed the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the problem under study (Oyedele, 2003).

### **3.3 Population**

Powers (1995) in De Vos et al. (2005, p. 193), defines a population as a set of entities in which all the measurements of interest to the practitioner or researcher are presented while Seaberg (1988) in De Vos et al. (2005, p. 193), defines a population as the total set from which the individuals or units of the study are chosen.

De Vos et al. (2005) state that the higher the population the more it is likely to have the required information. The target population consisted of parents who had children at the school, teachers who were teaching there as well as learners in Grade 3. The researcher opted for Namutuni Primary School, because it had 1109 learners and 30 teachers and it was where the researcher worked as a teacher.

The population of the study was made up of Grade 3 learners from Namutuni Primary School in the Khomas Education Region, their parents and the Grade 3 teachers at the school.

### **3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedures**

Seaberg (1988) in De Vos et al. (2005, p. 194), defines a sample as a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons which together comprise the subject of the study, while sampling according to Kerlinger (1986) in De Vos et al. (2005, p. 193) means

taking any portion of a population or universe as representative of that population or universe.

Namutuni Primary School was selected by means of convenience sampling from the five public primary schools within the “Plato Cluster”. Plato Cluster is one of the seven clusters in the Khomas Education Region. Plato Cluster offers English as a Second Language. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001) in De Vos et al. (2005), convenience sampling is used when a group of subjects are selected on the basis of being accessible or expedient. The researcher chose the convenience sampling method because the cases were available and easy to study (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996).

*This sample selection was based on the researcher’s knowledge of the population since she is a teacher at the selected school. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001) in De Vos et al. (2005), the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be informative about the topic of interest. The researcher did not deal with all the one hundred and twenty Grade 3 learners, but selected only, six learners from each class of forty at the school. The researcher requested the Grade 3 teachers to select six learners from their classes of which three could read while another three were not good readers.*

*The sample size of eighteen learners was determined by time and financial constraint. Borg and Gall (1979) in Cohen, Marion and Morrison (2007, p. 102) maintain that a sample size might also be constrained by cost in terms of time, money, stress and other factors. One of the reasons for the researcher to have fewer learners in the sample (18/20) was*

*that she wanted to have more tests (5). Increasing the learners in the sample would have necessitated a reduction in the number of tests administered. More tests were required to measure aspects which helped the study to meet objectives 2 and 3. The idea was to administer all five tests and find out the aspects of difficulties in reading that learners face rather than having a large sample (but fewer tests) which may have just showed a high frequency of similar reading difficulties, but without showing aspects of those reading difficulties for remedy's sake and that way meet research objective 3. So the choice of fewer learners and more tests was strategically done and not an oversight.*

*Eighteen learners of which nine could read and another nine were not good readers constituted the sample. Eighteen parents (one parent per family) of the eighteen selected children were selected to be part of the sample to save time. The three Grade 3 teachers at the school were also included in the sample. For comparison purposes, the parents of the learners who could not read well and those who could read well were included in the sample.*

### **3.5 Research Instruments**

The research instruments for collecting data for this study included reading tests, in – depth semi – structured interviews and interviews. Lerner (2000) states that reading can be assessed through informal measures such as the authentic and performance assessment or through formal tests such as diagnostic tests. This research study used authentic assessment. Authentic assessment is an alternative assessment to the formal standardized

tests. The researcher's teaching experience enabled her to develop different screening tests which were used in detecting the learners' different reading abilities. The main aim of these tests was to detect the learners' general reading level, word-recognition abilities, types of errors and techniques of attacking unknown words, related behavioural characteristics and understanding of the material. Single words presented out of context were also included so that the learners would not use contextual and linguistic cues to recognize these words when reading them.

### 3.5.1 Tests

The word "test" is usually used to describe a systematic procedure for obtaining a sample of student behaviour, while "assessment" is often used to describe a broader process of collecting information (Hoffmann, 1997). Whatever name is used, test, assessment, or examination all rely on the same basic technology which is social technology. According to Hoffmann (1997), technology refers to any body of special knowledge, activities, skills, methods and procedures that people use to meet a predetermined end, such as satisfying a need or solving a problem.

*The researcher administered five tests to the Grade 3 learners. The tests were meant to identify the aspects of difficulties the Grade 3 learners had in the English as their Second Language for the purpose of finding remedies. Test 1 (see Appendix G2) consisted of the letters of the alphabet to test the learners' letter sounding and learners' general ability to attend to the sounds of language. In order for a child to read, mastery of the alphabet is required. Test 2 (see Appendix G3) tested the learners' ability to recognize the words by sight or without the aid of word analysis. Test 3 (see Appendix G4) consisted of regular and irregular words (one and two syllables) to test the learners' ability of word*

*pronunciation even if they did not know what the word meant. Test 4 (see Appendix G5) consisted of non-word reading test (meaningless make-believe words or letter strings). These tested the learners' ability to word identification (pronunciation) as well as word attack (how a learner approaches a word).*

*The fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) test (see Appendix G6) consisted of three (3) reading passages. These passages tested the level at which learners could read independently with understanding (comprehension). The learners read aloud and the following were assessed in all three reading passages: 1. efficiency, i.e. the way of approaching every reading task with clear purpose and with the flexibility to adjust reading strategy; 2. decoding (discovering of meaning); 3. comprehension (understanding), as well as figure ground i.e. the ability to read orally with speed, also known as fluency. There were questions from each passage to test the learners' comprehension by answering the questions based on that passage.*

The following screening tests were used as authentic assessment to assess word recognition and reading comprehension:

- ✓ Letters of the alphabet (letter sound) phonics.
- ✓ Instant/sight words reading. These are words that are recognized instantly by a reader, without hesitation or further analysis.
- ✓ Single word reading:
  - a) Regular words: One and two syllable words that can be sounded out and spelled just as they sound.

- b) Irregular words: One and two syllable words with unusual spellings which learners are unlikely to recognize unless they have previously encountered the items and linked them to the words' meanings and correct pronunciation.
- ✓ Non-word reading test: These are meaningless make-believe words or letter strings which resemble English words and conform to the English spelling structure.
- ✓ Three reading passages were used to find out the level at which the learner can read independently with understanding (comprehension).

As a child read, the researcher observed his or her behaviours and made a few notes as outlined in Table 2 (McDowall, 1979, p. 36).

**Table 2: Scoring Key for Various Tests**

	<b>If a Child does this</b>	<b>Make this Notation</b>
1	Reads the word accurately	Do nothing or check off each word.
2	Substitutes an incorrect word. For example, the child reads “dog” but says, “dig”.	Write the called word above the text word. This would count as a mistake.
3	Inserts a word	Use a caret (^) where the word was inserted and write word. This would count as a mistake.
4	Omits a word	Circle the word that was omitted. This would count as a mistake.
5	Hesitates upon a word	Pause, then count one (1) full second for each letter in the word, and then if a child still does not attempt a word, one may tell him or her the word. If one does this then write a “T” above the word you told. This would count as a mistake.
6	Self correction, for example, the child reads dog but says, “dig”. Then says, “dog”.	Write “SC” above word. But this would not count as a mistake.

(Adapted from: Read, Write, Site: Level Estimator)

Table 2 outlines the scoring key for various tests one should observe when a child reads.

### **3.5.2 Interviews**

An interview is a data collection method in which an interviewer asks questions of an interviewee (Patton, 1990; Johnson and Christensen, 2004; Shank, 2006). Semi-structured interviews were used with the parents of the selected learners and the Grade 3 teachers. According to Gall, Borg and Gall (1996), semi-structured interviews involve asking a series of structured questions and then probing more deeply, using open-ended questions to obtain additional information. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) further state that this interview approach has the advantage of providing reasonably standard data across respondents, but of greater depth than can be obtained from a structured interview. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are defined as those organized around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth (May, 1991) in De Vos et al., (2005).

Interviews are important because they can provide information that cannot be either obtained through observations or a questionnaire. The questions were written out, and the interviewer read the questions exactly as written and in the same order to all interviewees (Patton, 1990; Sewel, 2001; Johnson and Christensen, 2004). This was done to ensure that all participants answered the same set of questions in the same order to avoid interviewer's bias. In order to cater for those parents who do not know English, the researcher translated the interview questions into the two local languages mostly used (Afrikaans and Oshiwambo).

### **3.5.3 In – depth semi – structured interviews**

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell , (2005) state that in semi – structured interviews the researcher has a list of themes and questions to be covered, Instead of an interview schedule, interview guides are used in a semi – structured interviews. According to Welman et al. (2005) in - depth interviews are used to explore a general area of interest in - depth.

The reason for using the in – depth semi - structured interview guide was to help the researcher elicit the knowledge and experiences of Grade 3 teachers about the issues of interest (Johnson and Christensen, 2004). The in – depth semi – structured interview guides were given to all three Grade 3 teachers. The in – depth semi – structured interview guide consisted of a combination of “yes” and “no” questions and open-ended questions.

The in – depth semi – structured interview guides consisted of two sections. The first section collected the biographical data. The second section of the in – depth semi – structured interview guide consisted of open-ended questions and collected data about the teachers' practices of teaching and reading methods in the classroom and the classroom environment, problems encountered and how they solved these problems. The views and attitudes of Grade 3 teachers towards reading, teaching methods and their expectations from the parents and the Ministry of Education were also included in this section of the in

– depth semi – structured interview guide. Open-ended questions require a function that goes well beyond inference (Newman, 1997) in De Vos et al. (2005). The researcher agreed with Gall, Borg and Gall (1996), who maintained that the open-ended form means that the respondents can make any response they wished.

The researcher agreed with Mouton (2001, p.103) in De Vos et al. (2005, p. 205) who maintains that one of the most common errors in doing research is that no piloting or pre-testing is done. Therefore, in – depth semi – structured interview guides were developed and piloted before the full survey was carried out to enable the researcher to modify the questions in the light of the responses received and if necessary improvement was done (Rubin 1983 p. 272, in De Vos et al. 2005, p. 209). He suggested that the researcher should try the items out with actual subjects from the target population. Then rewrite and edit again all items that caused confusion, annoyance, boredom and so on. The in - depth semi – structured interview guide was piloted on four Grade 3 teachers from other school. Piloting is recommended for feasibility, convenience and cost effectiveness (Punch, 2005 and Janesick, 2000). The people who participated in the pilot study were typical of the people from whom the main study intended to collect data. After the respondents finished completing the pretesting in – depth semi – structured interview guides, they were requested to give their comments or constructive criticism on wording and sequence, missing and confusing questions, redundancy or irrelevant items. There were no criticisms or comments given by the respondents, therefore no modification was done to the items in the in – depth semi – structured interview guide. The in – depth semi – structured interview guide was then administered to the full main study sample as developed by the researcher.

### 3.6 Data Collection Procedures

*Data for this qualitative study were retrieved from interviews, in – depth semi – structured interview guides and classroom assessment tests. Interviews were semi-structured.*

*The reason for having these instruments was for triangulation purposes. The researcher achieved triangulation by using multiple data sources. The data from the interviews and tests from the Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language, three Grade 3 teachers and the parents of the learners who participated in the study.*

*According to Patton (2001) triangulation is typically a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of the research or evaluation of findings. Patton (2001, p. 247) advocates the use of triangulation because it strengthens a study by combining methods, i.e using several kinds of methods of data collection. Patton (2001) further maintains that in qualitative research triangulation is used to probe for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features. An open-ended perspective in constructivism adheres with the notion of data triangulation by allowing participants in a research to assist the researcher in the research questions as well as with the data collection. Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study (Cresswell, 2000, p. 126).*

Before engaging in testing and interviewing the participants, the researcher requested permission through a letter to the Director of the Khomas Education Region to carry out the study in the region. In order to obtain access to the Grade 3 learners and teachers, the researcher asked the principal of the selected primary school for permission, also in writing. Parents were contacted through their children who were learners in Grade 3 at the school.

*The letter to the parents (see Appendix B1) served to introduce the researcher and explained the purpose of the interview to the learners' parents/guardians to convey to them the importance of the research, to assure them of confidentiality and to encourage their participation. The following items were included in the letter: the subject of the research; who was to be in the group and what was expected from them; how the respondents were selected. This was to inform them why they were selected; the purpose of the research; who was to benefit from the research. This was to encourage the participants to take part in the study; to appeal for their cooperation; to indicate how long it would take them to be interviewed; the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality as well as that they could withdraw at any time (Morgan and Kruger (1998) in De Vos et al. (2005, p. 305).*

During the interviews, the parents were asked questions about the backgrounds of their children and how they helped those with reading difficulties to understand and perform better. The researcher did this because she believed like Freeman (1992, p. 209), that parents and teachers always have to work actively together for a child to get the best results.

At school, the researcher administered the in – depth semi – structured interview guides herself to the teachers and explained to them what was expected of them. Furthermore, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants. The researcher also explained to the participants how the reading tests would be done. To minimize disruptions, the learners were sent one by one from their classes to the school library where the study tests were administered. The instruments were administered to the

learners starting with letter sounding, followed by the reading of sight words, single word reading, non-word reading and ending with reading of passages and answering of questions based on the passage read to test their comprehension. Finally, the semi-structured interviews were conducted on the days that were convenient for the parents. The facts that data were collected during the normal school time, the learners were only released from their classes during the reading period, for them not to miss other periods. Therefore, it took two to three days for the researcher to administer the tests to one learner. Because of the responsibilities the teachers and the researcher had at school, each teacher was interviewed on a different day. It took three days to interview the teachers. Data were collected from July to September 2008.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Procedure**

According to Miles and Huberman (1994) the critical question in analyzing qualitative data is whether the meanings one finds are valid, repeatable and right. Bearing this in mind, the data were analyzed by drawing up a comprehensive descriptive analysis of the identified themes and patterns that emerged.

To analyze the quantifiable data, a scoring key for the different tests that were taken by the learners was developed by the researcher (See Appendix H). All data collected from the parents, teachers and learners were sorted out and arranged according to the study objectives. The data collected from the interviews with the parents and the teachers (qualitative) and the reading tests with the learners (quantitative) were organized in such a way that similar ideas and trends in the data were placed together. The responses were placed in categories based on the scores attained on the tests. Frequency tables were also used for data presentation and analysis.

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration**

According to De Vos et al. (2005, p. 69), ethics in research are important in ensuring the humane treatment of participants in the research. Three of the ethical considerations, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were important to this study. In this study an informed consent meant that those interviewed or observed had given their permission to participate in the study, were fully aware of the purpose of the research and the consequences for them in taking part. A written informed consent form had to be signed by the intended participants. In this research informed consent was gained from teachers, parents on their own behalf as well as on behalf of their children. All parents read and signed the consent forms. Confidentiality according to De Vos et al. (2005, p. 62), is the principle of allowing people not only to talk in confidence, but also to refuse to allow publication of any material that they think might harm them in any way. Anonymity ensured the protection of the participants' right to privacy and confidentiality.

At the centre of all research is the issue of ethical considerations. All research should be conducted under acceptable standards of behaviour (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996, p. 96). It is of utmost importance to ensure that participants in the study are well informed about the purpose of the study and its benefits before they take part. Participation in the research was not compulsory but on a voluntary basis and any person selected had the right to refuse or withdraw from the study. It was the responsibility of the researcher to provide clear information to the potential participants before undertaking the research including information regarding withdrawal from the study (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996, p. 88). Such information was provided directly by the researcher to the participants by dissemination of the questionnaires to the Grade 3 teachers and in the invitation letters to the parents of the Grade 3 learners to come for interviews. It is important to note that the questionnaire had an information note indicating to the respondents the purpose for requesting for their support in taking part in the study.

Individuals or groups providing the information were also assured of confidentiality and that the results would be used only for the purpose of the research. No information would be linked to a specific individual or group of people.

### **3.9 Summary**

This chapter described the methodology and procedures that were used to collect the data from the respondents. The qualitative research design was used to allow the researcher to interpret the results in different ways. The population, the sample and sampling procedures, the research instruments (tests, interviews and in-depth semi – structured interview guides) as well as the data collection procedures and the data analysis procedures were also described in this chapter. The chapter further discussed the ethics considered in ensuring the humane treatment of the participant in the research. The next chapter presents and discusses the research findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the data that were collected are presented, analyzed and discussed according to the objectives that guided the study. The results were presented under objectives (see Chapter One) and mostly through the use of tables and graphs. In order to ensure that the information collected on the reading difficulties experienced by the Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language under investigation was reliable and consistent, data were collected through open-ended interviews with the parents and semi-structured in-depth semi-structured interview guides for the teachers. These were constructed by the researcher after literature review. The reading tests used for the Grade 3 learners as research instrument to collect data adapted from the following sources:

- Task One. Letters of the alphabet were adapted from (Walton 1998, p. 106).
- Task Two. Instant words were adapted from (McDowall 1979, p. 9).
- Task Three. Single word reading: regular and irregular words were adapted from (Funnel and Stuart 1995, p. 100).
- Task Four. Non-word reading was adapted from (Funnel and Stuart 1995, p. 109).
- Task Five. Reading Passages, level one, two and three were adapted from (Ward 1992, pp. 3, 31, 92).

#### **4.2 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

##### **4.2.1 Demographic Profile of the Teachers**

###### **4.2.1.1 Personal Attributes:**

Teachers were asked to indicate their ages. Table 3 provides their responses.

**Table 3: Ages of the Teachers (N=3)**

Age Intervals in Years	No. of Teachers
21 – 25	1
26 – 30	1
31 – 35	0
36 – 40	0
41 – 45	0
46 – 50	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>

*The age range of teachers was between 21 and 50 as indicated in Table 3. Two teachers were below 30 years while one was 46 years. The three Grade 3 teachers were all females. It was assumed that the age of the teachers may have a bearing on their knowledge and practice in the methods of teaching reading. It was expected that older teachers have more teaching experience than younger teachers.*

#### 4.2.1.2 Professional Qualifications of Teachers

Teachers were asked to indicate their highest professional qualifications. Table 4 shows their responses.

**Table 4: Professional qualifications of the teachers (N=3)**

Highest Professional Qualification	No of Teachers
School certificate	0
Basic Teachers' Diploma in Education (BETD)	2
Postgraduate qualification/ PGDE	1
Other	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>

Table 4 shows that the teachers had different qualifications. Two of the three teachers had Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD) while one had a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). The level of education of an individual might have a bearing on the knowledge and practice of that person in his or her field of operation. All three teachers were qualified teachers. Therefore, by virtue of their qualifications these individuals were expected to have knowledge in different methods of teaching reading because different teaching methods had been incorporated into the curricula of the teacher training colleges (BETD) (Van Graan, 1998). For the benefit of serving teachers, who might not have been exposed to different methods of teaching reading during their teacher training, the learner-centred approach to teaching had become a major component of in-service training in the form of workshops at regional and national levels, cluster workshops within regions, subject meetings and classroom demonstrations (Van Graan, 1998). In the light of this, it was assumed that teachers who have been exposed to learner-centred methods of teaching should have knowledge of different teaching methods including reading teaching methods and should be able to use them in their classrooms when teaching reading, even though the senior teacher would have more experience than the young ones.

#### **4.2.1.3 Teaching Experience**

The teachers were asked to indicate their years of teaching experience. Table 5 shows their responses.

**Table 5: Teaching Experiences of the Teachers (N=3)**

<b>No. of Years</b>	<b>No. of Teachers</b>
1 – 3	0
4 – 6	2
6 and above	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>

*As shown in Table 5 two of the three teachers had been in the teaching service for four to six years while one of the teachers had been teaching for more than six years. The number of years in the teaching service could have a bearing on one's knowledge and practices of teaching reading methods. Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) state that the preschool and primary school teachers' knowledge and experience, are central to achieving the goal of primary prevention of reading difficulties.*

Being in the service for four or more years, one should have gained enough knowledge and experience of teaching reading methods, because of the in-service trainings received. It could be concluded that the problem to organize a suitable reading lesson could be attributed to the lack of resources needed to be used such as insufficient textbooks and library inaccessibility. Ghani (1993, p. 119) notes that most teachers might have great problems in finding the correct level of reading materials for their learners from their environments. The research results showed that all three teachers did not have sufficient reading materials and that the lower primary phase was not accommodated in the timetable of the library programme.

#### **4.3 ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTED FROM THE TEACHERS**

##### **4.3.1 Teachers' views on English as Second Language Reading Difficulties of the Grade 3 Learners**

###### *a) Factors within the Individual*

- (i) Teachers were asked to give their views on the factors within the individual learners associated with reading difficulties. Table 6 indicates their responses.

**Table 6: Factors within the Individual Learner (N=3)**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
All children with reading difficulties have visual motor problems.	0	0	3	0
If a child is diagnosed with a reading difficulty, there is likelihood that other family members will also have difficulties with reading.	0	1	0	2

All three teachers disagreed that all the children with reading difficulties have visual motor problems. With regard to the second statement one teacher was in agreement with Gilger, Pennington and De Fries (1991) who stated that if a child was diagnosed with a reading difficulty there was a higher probability that other family members would also have difficulties with reading. Among the learners in the study, no learner was identified with reading difficulties due to visual motor problems. The study results did not concur with the statement.

The researcher disagreed with both statements. From experience as a teacher, not all the children with reading difficulties have visual problems. About the second statement, reading difficulty is an individual problem. One parent in the study whose child had reading difficulty, indicated that the other children in the family could read well. They even tried to help him, but they gave up. During the researcher's career as a teacher in most cases, individual children had difficulties in reading, while other children in the family did not have any reading difficulties.

(ii) Teachers were asked to indicate whether the problems listed below were applicable to their learners. Table 7 indicates their responses.

<b>Problems</b>	<b>No. of Teachers</b>
Disorder of mind caused by the accident that has involved damage to the brain.	0
Visual motor problem.	0
Delayed speech.	0
History of reading disability in one's family.	3
Inability to process information.	3
Health and emotional problems e.g. living in difficult environment.	3

**Table 7: Problems Applicable to Contribute to the Grade 3 Learners' Reading Difficulties. (N=3)**

Table 7 shows that the most important problems applicable to the learners were the inability to process information, the health and emotional problems such as living in a difficult environment as well as history of reading disability in one's family, as indicated by all 3 teachers.

These findings generally concur with what Perfetti (1985) says. Problems within the individual such as health and emotional problems tend to increase when students live in difficult environments.

Further analysis of the answers pertaining to the question at hand revealed that one teacher indicated that one of the learners identified with reading difficulties had a cousin who was also identified to have difficulties with reading. This concurred with Gilger et al. (1991), who stated that if a child was diagnosed with a reading difficulty there was a higher than normal probability that other family members might also have difficulties with reading. Two learners in the study had a history of reading disabilities in their families. Five learners were unable to process information while three learners had health and emotional problems. One was a vulnerable child whose parents had died and was staying with grandparents who were not working. The other two learners were, according to their teachers, often being ill. Their health conditions deteriorated which resulted in uncontrolled absenteeism. This negatively affected their learning progress in general, reading in particular.

*b) Factors in the Home, Social and Cultural Environment*

Teachers were asked to indicate the factors in the home, social and cultural environments associated with reading difficulties among the learners of English Second Language. Table 8 presents their responses to this question.

**Table 8: Factors in the Home, Social and Cultural Environment Associated with Reading Difficulties (N=3)**

Problems/Factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Children with limited proficiency in English are more likely to have reading difficulties.	0	1	2	0
Children with pre-language impairments are more likely to have reading difficulties.	0	1	2	0
Home/cultural environments in which children grow up, can influence their ability to read.	1	0	1	1

*As indicated in Table 8, one teacher was in agreement with the statement that children with limited proficiency in English were more likely to have reading difficulties as well as with the fact that children with pre-language impairments were more likely to have reading difficulties while two teachers disagreed with these statements. Sixteen learners in the study sample had limited proficiency in English. This was probably due to the fact that many children entered school not speaking English, the official language, and many of the learners were not taught through their primary language when they entered school. The English language thus became a barrier in some instances as learners did not have sufficient exposure to this language. This finding concurred with Jacob and Jordan (1987) in Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) who maintained that the use of non-standard*

*varieties of English or limited proficiency in the English language would put children with limited English proficiency at a disadvantage. This is why many Namibian children experience reading difficulties in English as their second language. No learner in this study was identified with pre-language impairments.*

On the statement of whether home or cultural environments in which the children grew, could influence their ability to read, one of the teachers agreed while two of the teachers disagreed.

Two learners in the study were from unstable families where the parents were always quarrelling and fighting. According to one of the two children, the fighting resulted in the children being chased away from home or one of the parents having to leave the house for a few days. There was no peace in their house at all. One of the two children stayed with a mother and grandmother, where the grandmother who was a pensioner was the breadwinner. The mother did not work and she had seven children. All of them were taken care of by the grandmother. According to her teacher, this child always slept in class because of hunger. The other child was an orphan, and also stayed with the grandmother with other children from his aunties (his mother's sisters' children). These unstable home environments could contribute to the poor scholastic abilities that were experienced by these learners, specifically the reading difficulties. This finding is in line with Richek et al. (1996), who maintain that home, social and cultural environments in which a child grows up can also influence his/her ability to read. The researcher agreed with the above statement in that most cases of reading difficulties are likely to be found in children from unstable families, as it is also the case in the study.

c) *Factors in the School Environment*

Teachers were asked to indicate factors in the school environment associated with the reading difficulties among the learners of English Second Language. Table 9 presents their responses to this question.

**Table 9: Factors in the School Environment Associated with the Reading Difficulties**

<b>Problems/Factors</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Learners with reading difficulties are not practicing enough reading on their own to improve their reading abilities.	0	3	0	0
Teachers can contribute to reading difficulties of learners by the way they teach.	0	3	0	0
The school environment can also cause English as a Second Language reading difficulties to the learners.	0	3	0	0
A child who is a poor reader in grade 1 has a greater chance of being a poor reader in later grades.	0	2	1	0
Learners with reading difficulties do not read much in school.	0	2	1	0

Table 9 shows that all three teachers were in agreement with the following statements:

- (i) Learners with reading difficulties are not practicing enough reading on their own to improve their reading abilities. This finding generally concurred with Juel (1994), who states that learners with reading difficulties are not practicing enough to improve their reading abilities.
  
- (ii) Teachers can contribute to reading difficulties of learners by the way they teach. The researcher agreed with this statement. The statement concurred with the research findings in that it was not all the teachers implemented the curriculum as it stipulating that homework should be given every day. The fact that two of the teachers in the study did not indicate that they gave reading homework to their learners could contribute to the reading difficulties of the learners. Learners were not given opportunity to practice reading on their own, hence they had reading difficulties.

(iii) The school environment can also cause English as a Second Language reading difficulties to the learners. All three teachers were in agreement with the two statements referring to the factors in the school environment. These findings concurred with those by Allington and Stanovich (1994) who maintain that some school practices can contribute to reading problems. They further note that it is possible that teachers, whose job is to help the children, can actually be doing some things that are harmful to the learner. Allington and Stanovich (1994) give an example of a teacher who had entirely given up teaching a child to read. Instead the teacher simply reads everything to the child. When other children had reading time, that child was expected to sit quietly and do nothing.

(iv) Only one teacher disagreed with the statements that a child who is a poor reader in grade 1 has a greater chance of being a poor reader in later grades and that learners with reading difficulties do not read much in school. This finding concurred with Juel (1994) who states that a child who is a poor reader in Grade 1 has an 88% chance of being a poor reader in Grade 4. Juel (1994) further maintains that unskilled readers spend less time reading than do average learners. One child in the study who could not read used to leave her books at school, so that when asked by the parents about the homework, she accused the teachers of locking up her bag in the classroom, as reported by the mother. According to the teachers, the reason why some learners could not read much in school is because of shyness and being afraid to be laughed at by others.

When the teachers were asked to list other school environmental factors which they thought contributed to reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language, only one teacher responded to the question. She indicated that disabilities such as difficulty in speaking and shyness because the child was afraid to be laughed at by others would contribute to reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners. The teacher further mentioned that a child sometimes started school late or came with limited English proficiency. On the other hand, poor or inadequate reading instruction would put a child with reading difficulty at a disadvantage (Jacob and Jordan, 1987; Allington and Stanovich, 1994).

To the question about the learners' attitude towards reading in general, the teachers answered as follows: Two teachers indicated that those learners who knew how to read liked reading, while those who could not read did not like reading. Reading attitude thus depended on the child's ability to read. All the three teachers stated that the learners who could not read hated reading, and most of the time they drew pictures instead of reading. However, we can argue here that drawing pictures, especially if they can describe those drawings or narrate a story on the drawing is a vital and positive stage to learning how to read. This must be acknowledged by the teachers.

The teachers' teaching method could be attributed to a learner's attitude towards reading, if the materials selected in teaching reading were not at the child's level. The teacher could lack the proper approach of teaching reading to a child with reading difficulties as referred to by Ghani (1993, p. 117). Ghani (1993) notes four main problems that affect the teachers in preparing suitable reading materials. These are, to decide on the purpose of reading in order to determine the level of reading difficulty of a child; to decide on the cognitive level of understanding of a child; to select the text with the right level of difficulty for both the child and the teacher and to decide on the correct length of the text. The teacher could also ignore that particular child while teaching reading. On the other hand, the child, because he/she could not read, may try to keep himself/herself busy with something else.

To the question as to what part of the reading lesson learners enjoyed, one of the teachers mentioned "pre-reading" while another one mentioned "stories" (which according to the researcher was also pre-reading), that teachers used to tell before starting with the reading lessons. According to the teachers, they used to read stories related to the lesson and the topic that would be read.

d) *Automatic Promotion*

The teachers were asked to indicate how automatic promotion was done at their school. All the three teachers indicated that a learner was expected to meet the basic competencies and could be held back if he/she had very poor academic skills. But a learner could only be held back once in the phase (e.g. Grades 1 - 4 Lower Primary Phase and Grades 5 - 7 Upper Primary Phase) regardless of the level of his/her performance. This explained why a learner was held back only once in a phase. Even if such a learner still had poor academic skills, such a learner was eligible to promotion. Automatically, he/she had to be promoted throughout the consecutive grades of that current phase. This was the case of three learners in the study. This contributed to reading difficulties among the learners, for the children were promoted before they had acquired enough reading skills.

Teachers were asked to indicate their views on automatic promotion. Their responses are given in Table 10.

**Teachers' Views on Automatic Promotion Policy**

**Table 10: Automatic Promotion of Learners (N=3)**

<b>Statement/Problem</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Automatic promotion is one of the contributing factors to reading difficulties of the Grade 3 learners.	1	1	0	1
Automatic promotion policy enhances quality education in Namibia.	0	0	0	3

Table 10 shows that two teachers were in agreement with the statement that automatic promotion was one of the contributing factors to reading difficulties experienced by the Grade 3 learners, while one teacher disagreed. Regarding the statement “automatic

promotion policy enhances quality education in Namibia”, all three teachers strongly disagreed with the statement.

When asked to motivate their answers about automatic promotion whether it enhanced quality education or not, the teachers indicated that if a child was promoted without basic skills in reading, this would cause problems in the next grade. While the issue of automatic promotion has been identified by both teachers and parents and supported by literature review (see p. 3) as one negative aspect towards enhancing reading, it must be observed that making learners repeat a year is a contentious issue as it brings in costs, both by parents and the government. Pedagogically we are not sure what package is reserved for all those who are made to repeat a given grade.

e) *Teaching Methods*

When the teachers were asked to list some of the teaching methods and classroom activities they used when teaching reading in English as a Second Language, the following was their responses: Two teachers indicated that they used *look and say method* where a child would pick up a card, look at it and say the word written on it. The two teachers further mentioned *motivation* as one of the ways they used to encourage a child when s/he reads well. “*A teacher should encourage a learner to read aloud with pleasure and praised him when he/she reads well.*” One teacher mentioned *shared reading* when a child reads while a teacher listened and helped him or her. Sometimes a teacher also reads for a child while children listen and repeat after her.

When teachers were asked to indicate what method(s) were useful for teaching and learning to read, all three teachers mentioned the phonics method; two of them mentioned flash cards, story methods and sentence strips, while motivation, look and say methods, sight words and picture cards were mentioned by individual teachers.

The teachers were also asked to indicate which reading materials were useful for teaching and learning to read English as a Second Language. All the three teachers mentioned

pictures, picture cards and books with pictures as useful materials in teaching and learning to read. Individual teachers mentioned posters, flash cards, sentence strips and books with big print as useful materials.

The teachers were also asked to indicate which methods of teaching reading they put more emphasis. Their responses are given in Table 11.

**Table 11: Reading Instructions**

<b>Reading Instructions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Letter-sound (phonics)	3	0
Letter differentiation	3	0
Fluency and reading problems	2	1
Pronunciation	3	0
Spelling	2	1
Comprehension	3	0

Looking at Table 11, similar instructions appeared to have been indicated by all the teachers except for the instructions “fluency and reading problems” and “spelling” which were indicated by two teachers respectively. It seemed that all the instructions in Table 11 were generally used by all the Grade 3 teachers of English as a Second Language in teaching reading and learning to read.

If this was the case, then most of the methods of teaching reading were used by all the teachers. The researcher therefore concluded that reading problems stemmed from other factors that were not teaching related.

To the question as to “how the medium of instruction used at school affected reading abilities of learners at lower primary level”, the three teachers stressed that the difference of sounds in English and in other languages used such as Afrikaans and Oshindonga caused confusion among the beginning readers. The Oshindonga speaking people spelt most of the words as they sounded them, such as the word “ko-to-ka” is straightforward, since the units represented/syllables are pronounceable and real even to the young child. The teachers agreed with Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) that English can present a challenge for a learner who expects to find each letter always linked to just one sound.

The 3 teachers were in agreement with the view that, the teachers who were poorly trained in effective methods of teaching beginning readers contributed to reading problems among the learners. When asked to mention other factors contributing to English as a Second Language reading difficulties, the teachers gave different responses. The lack of parental involvement in their children's school work was one of the factors mentioned by one teacher. Too few reading materials in school and the lack of modern teaching aids such as overhead projects were also mentioned by one other teacher.

Teachers were also asked to mention the methods they used to encourage their learners' reading. To this question, each individual teacher came up with a different response. One of the three teachers used pair-reading. Through this method, learners helped each other and corrected one another while reading. The other teacher mentioned telling stories and reading a lot of newspapers and magazines. The other teacher mentioned reading aloud by individual learners to enable her to detect intonations and learners' fluency. She also mentioned group reading and pair reading as well as silent reading as useful methods to test their understanding. Silent reading, according to Day and Richard (2000), can be used as a tool to improve learners' reading skills by preparing reading materials which learners read and report back to their teachers and fellow learners.

About the performance of Grade 3 learners in other subjects such as Mathematics, Handwriting and Environment Studies, the teachers indicated that this was determined by the learners' reading abilities. Those who read well, performed well in other subjects, while those who did not read well, failed to cope in other subjects. From experience as a teacher, a learner who has difficulties with oral, reading and written language was more likely to experience problems in other subjects as well. In order for a learner to perform better in other subjects, he/she needs to have a basic knowledge of that particular language in which all the subjects are taught.

#### **4.4 Strategies that could be Used to Address Reading Difficulties of the Grade 3 Learners**

Only one of the three teachers indicated that she gave homework to her learners everyday; the other two did not indicate anything. All of them indicated that there was a library at school. Two of them indicated that they borrow books from the library and read them to their learners. Sometimes those learners, who could read, should read for others. They also mentioned that the timetable did not accommodate the lower primary phase for learners to read books in the library. Apart from the library books, one of the teachers explained that she also asked the parents to buy some books at the learners' level and bring them to school for learners to read. This was how they improved the learners' reading skills through library use.

Teachers were asked what strategies they used to address reading difficulties of the Grade 3 learners. All the three teachers indicated that they had enough English newspapers and magazines. They also made use of a tape recorder to teach reading, telling stories and spelling. They further indicated that they received the reading instructional advice per term from the subject advisor or the facilitator. The findings showed that they were up to date with the current methods of teaching reading, as they attended workshops. One of the teachers indicated that she had a training workshop on English as a Second Language every year.

To the question as to what strategies they thought could be used to address the English Second Language reading difficulties of Grade 3 learners, parental involvement was mentioned by two of the three teachers. Individual teachers came up with the following strategies: more workshops to be conducted; lower primary to have access to the library; teacher self upgrading; lower teacher-learner ratios; use of various teaching methods and more reading homework given regularly to reduce reading difficulties.

The teachers' expectations from the parents and the Ministry of Education are discussed further in this report.

#### **4.4.1 Parents**

The teachers indicated that the parents should be part and parcel of their children's school work. Furthermore, there should be a link between the parents and the teachers. If both the parents and the teachers are aware of the child's reading problem, they could join efforts and work together to help the child early enough to overcome or to cope with the problem. According to Griffins and Hamilton (1984) in Auala et al. (2001, p. 132), if parents involve themselves more actively in their children's development and learning, then evidence shows that children will achieve more.

The teachers further indicated that the parents should respond to calls at school regarding their children. The teachers use such organized sessions to discuss the children's behavior and progress with their parents and to advise the parents on how to help their children with their homework, to participate in all school related matters, to teach children about moral issues. Schools also wanted parents to be serious with their children's education, to make sure that they (learners) were neat and tidy. The more parents are involved in their children's schooling, the greater the chances of the children doing well.

#### **4.4.2 Ministry of Education**

The teachers felt that the Ministry of Education should hold more workshops and introduce new methods of teaching reading and train the teachers to sound through such workshops.

#### **4.4.3 Improving Reading Performance**

Teachers were also asked to give their views on how to improve the reading performance of their learners. They felt that: 1) Children should be given as much homework as possible; 2) Children should attend kinder-garten before they enter the primary school; 3) Children should also be provided with reading materials of different levels (easy to challenging based on the phases served by a given school) by the Ministry of Education;

4) Books should be distributed by the Ministry of Education on time to school; and 5) Teachers should motivate their learners to read.

## **4.5 PARENTS' RESPONSES**

### **4.5.1 Demographic Profile of the Parents**

All the parents of the eighteen Grade 3 learners who participated in the study were expected to take part in this study. But the researcher failed to get hold of all the parents, as expected. Nonetheless, a total of thirteen parents, five of whom were males participated in the study. The time and financial constraints made it difficult for the researcher to follow up the parents who did not come for the interview. According to their children the parents did not have transport money to come for the interview.

### **4.5.2 Personal Attributes of the Parents**

Parents were asked to indicate their ages. Table 12 provides their responses.

**Table 12: Ages of the Parents N=13**

<b>Ages</b>	<b>No. of Parents</b>
21 –25	0
26 – 30	6
31 – 35	4
36 – 40	2
41 – 45	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

The age range of parents was between 26 and 45 as shown in Table 12. Ten of the parents were between 26 and 35 years while the remaining three of the parents were 36 years and above. Eleven of the parents indicated that they helped their children with their schoolwork. The two parents with primary education indicated that they had difficulties in reading and writing. They only had the basic skills in reading and writing.

### 4.5.3 Qualifications of the Parents

Parents were asked to indicate their highest qualifications. Table 13 presents their responses.

**Table 13: Qualification of the Parents (N=13)**

<b>Highest Qualification</b>	<b>No. of Parents</b>
Not been to school	0
Primary education	2
Grade 10 to Grade 12	8
College education	0
University education	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

Table 13 shows that the parents had different qualifications. The majority (8 out of 13) had Grade 10 up to 12 qualifications. Three parents had university education. The levels of education of individuals may have a bearing on their willingness and ability to help their children with school work. All 13 parents indicated that they were fully involved in their children's education.

Only two of the parents had primary education. One of the two parents who had only primary education, when interviewed mentioned that, she did not see any need to help the child with school work because this was the responsibility of the teachers. She further mentioned that she did not understand English very well and Mathematics was very difficult for her as a result, failed to help her child with school work. The second parent who also had primary education said that she used to ask her younger brother who was in Grade 7 to help her child with the school work as she was always busy selling “kapana”, (Cooked or roasted meat cut in small pieces and sold at home or at the open markets), which according to her was the only source of income for her family.

### 4.5.4 Occupation of the Parents

The parents were asked to indicate their occupations. Table 14 shows their responses.

**Table 14: Parents' Occupations (N=13)**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No. of Parents</b>
Accountant	1
Businessman	2
Domestic worker	1
Nurse	1
Policeman	2
Secretary	1
Self employed	2
Teacher	1
Unemployed	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

Table 14 shows that the majority (11) of the parents was working. Only two parents were not working. According to Table 14 the majority 11 of the parents were in a position to afford buying materials for their children.

#### **4.6 ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTED FROM PARENTS**

##### **4.6.1 Parents' Views on Factors which Contributed to English Reading Difficulties of the Grade 3 Learners**

The parents were asked to indicate their views on factors which contributed to English reading difficulties of the Grade 3 learners. The following are their responses:

1. Hunger and poverty were mentioned by eight parents.
2. Four parents mentioned an unhealthy environment as a contributing factor to reading difficulties.
3. One parent indicated parents' illiteracy as one of the contributing factors to reading difficulties.
4. One parent mentioned that she did not have any work and she could not afford buying food for the children. Her children stayed mostly without eating for two to three days. Such a child cannot concentrate in school.

The first three findings are in agreement with those by Richek, Caldwell, Jennings and Lerner (1996) who state that homes that are plagued with poverty and family instability, and children who were hungry produced an increased risk for reading difficulties.

The fourth response concurs also with that of Richek et al. (1996) who observed that under-educated parents and guardians may lack time and skills to nurture literacy by sharing books with their children, as it was found out by the study that two of the parents interviewed who had only primary education could not help their children with their school work

Nine parents had children who had attended kinder-garten. They were not expected to have reading difficulties. Lerner (1996) indicates that children who are likely to have reading difficulties in the primary grades are those who begin school with less prior knowledge and skills in relevant domains. This was also indicated by teachers in the questionnaires that learners who had not attended kindergarten before entering primary school experienced reading difficulties as they had little or no exposure to reading in the English language.

When asked what they thought were the factors which contributed to English reading difficulties of the Grade 3 learners, the parents came up with different views: One parent said that he tried to help his child with the schoolwork, but he later lost hope as the child did not make any progress. Another parent mentioned that she was unable to help her child because of her work. She had to go to work at six o'clock in the morning and came back as late as ten o'clock in the evening. By that time the child was already in bed. Another parent mentioned the lack of time because of the work pressure which made it difficult for him to help with his child's school work.

Another parent mentioned that she did not see the importance of her participation in her child's work, as this was the teachers' responsibility to help the child. She further mentioned that she had difficulty with understanding the schoolwork especially English and Mathematics. This parent was one of the two parents who had primary education

qualification. This parent was advised by the researcher to ask someone, a neighbour or a friend, to help her with her child's schoolwork.

*Another parent stated that the homework which was given to the child without textbooks was difficult to be understood as learners did not take the textbooks home due to the lack of textbooks at school. All the parents mentioned that parental involvement was of utmost importance. They all felt that they should be involved in their children's education. The researcher tends to agree with the parents in this regard. This was underscored by Bastiani (1992) in Auala et al. (2001, p. 148) who is of the opinion that schools cannot survive without the involvement of parents.*

Poor sight and brain damage caused by accident or at birth were also mentioned by one parent as causes of reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners. This parent's reasons concurred with those indicated by Richek, Caldewell, Hennings and Lerner (1996) who maintain that poor sight is one of the factors responsible for reading difficulties within the individuals, even though no learner was identified with poor sight in the study.

Four of the parents, whose children were identified with reading difficulties, when interviewed by the researcher, indicated that the other children in the family read well and even tried to assist that particular child, but they failed. One parent, whose child could not read, mentioned that the child was too playful. Another one said that his child did not want to be assisted by others. He had tried many times, but had since given up. During the informal observation as the learners were reading, the researcher assumed that this learner did not have any interest in reading. When asked to read, this learner started looking around in the class. There seems to be no understanding of the importance of reading in this child.

To the question whether the parents had reading materials at home, eight of the parents indicated that they had reading materials for their children at home. When they were asked to explain how they ensured extra or supplementary reading by their children, two out of the four parents who did not have reading materials at home answered as follows. *“I used to call a friend to come and teach my child to read.”* While the other one used to go through the books with his child and used stones when doing Mathematics.

A learner may be struggling in reading in the classroom due to many factors such as poor teaching methods, a non-motivating and hostile classroom environment, and lack of self confidence, low self-esteem, and fear of failure and classroom anxiety.

#### **4.6.2 Strategies that could be Used to Address Reading Difficulties among the Grade 3 Learners**

Parents were asked to indicate how regularly their children got homework from their school teachers. Table 15 shows their responses.

**Table 15: How often Children Get Homework as Indicated by the Parents.**

<b>Frequency of Homework Given to Learners</b>	<b>No. of Parents</b>
Every day	4
Two times a week	6
Once a week	2
Not at all	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

As can be seen from Table 15, six parents indicated that most of their children got homework only twice per week which was not enough for a child to practice reading. Although four of the parents indicated that their children got homework every day, two indicated that they got homework only once per week, which was not even prescribed by the syllabus. Still, one parent indicated that his child never got homework at all. This parent’s child could not read. This finding supports Juel’s (1994) results. He found that learners with reading difficulties spend less time on reading. On the other hand the researcher concluded that the child who indicated that he never got homework might talk

the truth, because it was only one of the three teachers who indicated that she gave reading homework to her learners while the other two did not indicate anything. Eleven parents indicated that their children were assisted with reading at home.

#### **4.6.3 Parents' Expectations of the Teachers**

The parents were asked to indicate their expectations of the teachers in addressing reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners.

Below are the parents' responses regarding their expectations of the teachers in addressing reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners.

- The teachers should identify learners with reading difficulties and do compensatory teaching during the periods;
- They should help the learners with extra reading lessons in the afternoon;
- Teachers' should give homework regularly to the learners and reading work every day;
- Teachers should attend workshops to upgrade themselves and get proper training for the grade taught;
- Teachers should encourage parents to send their children to kindergartens and pre-schools so that the children could gain sufficient literacy knowledge and skills in relevant domains such as general verbal abilities, the ability to attend to the sounds of language as distinct from its meaning, familiarity with the basic purposes and mechanisms of reading, and letter knowledge;
- Teachers should use various methods of teaching reading and do more reading lessons in the classes;
- Teachers should ask the learners who can read well to assist those who cannot read well;
- Teachers should build a relationship with parents and discuss the child's problem;
- Teachers should provide learners with extra reading materials at their level to read at home and motivate the learners to read more;

- Learners should be given a timetable for tests so that they can get used to learn/study. The school has to invite former learners who were outstanding to motivate other learners. Teachers should be tolerant with slow learners;
- The researcher suggested that the teachers should be responsible to accommodate the linguistic needs of the learners with limited proficiency in English by teaching them how to read in their local languages while acquiring proficiency in spoken English and then subsequently taught to extend their skills to read in English;
- Manageable class size, teacher-learner ratio, high quality instructional materials in sufficient quantity and good school library accessibility to all the primary phases, should be taken into consideration by the school;

The above were the parents' responses regarding their expectations of the teachers in addressing reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners. The following were their expectations of the ministry.

#### **4.6.4 Parents' Expectations of the Ministry of Education**

The parents were asked to indicate their expectations of the Ministry of Education in addressing reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners.

Below are the parents' responses regarding their expectations of the Ministry of Education, in addressing reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners.

The Ministry of Education should:

- Organise many workshops for English teachers and supply more materials relating to reading.
- It should reduce the huge number of learners in classes.
- The Ministry should work together with the schools in training the parents on how to assist their children when it comes to schoolwork, especially reading.

- It should supply enough books and other reading materials and employ enough and well trained teachers.
- The placement of teachers should be done correctly i.e. only teachers who are trained for lower primary should teach the lower primary phase.
- The Ministry should do away with the policy of automatic promotion.
- Learners with reading difficulties should not be promoted or transferred to the next grade to avoid high failure rates in Grade 10.

Parents were asked to give any other comments on how to improve reading in general. The following were their responses:

- Learners should be given homework diaries which will be signed by the parents or the guardians every day.
- Learners should be motivated and encouraged by giving them incentives in the form of stars or dots when they do well.
- There should be a link between the parents and the teachers.
- Parents should get involved with their children's schoolwork.
- Homework or other instructions concerning the school work should be clear and to the point to enable parents to help their children;
- Slow learners should be accommodated in separate classes and not taught with the gifted ones;
- School should provide the learners with enough reading materials such as newspapers, magazines, etc.;
- Regular homework should be given.

#### **4.7 ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTED FROM THE LEARNERS**

Eighteen learners were studied. The learners were observed by the researcher as they read the reading exercises aloud. The aim of this assessment was to detect the learners' general reading level, starting with sounding the letters of the alphabet, word recognition abilities, types of errors, techniques of attacking unknown words, related behavioural

characteristics and understanding of the material that they read. It was also important to include single words presented out of context so that the learners would not use contextual and linguistic cues to recognise these words when reading them.

The results of the various reading texts that were conducted with the Grade 3 learners are discussed next. The learners were assessed randomly, to make sure that good as well as poor readers were assessed during the study to avoid diagnosing a problem when none was present as well as failing to locate a problem when one existed.

The results of the reading performance of the eighteen Grade 3 learners who participated in the study are presented in Table 16.

**Table 16: Reading Results of the Grade 3 Learners of English as a L2 (N=18)**

<b>Reading</b>	<b>Letters of the Alphabet</b>	<b>Instant Words</b>	<b>Regular Words</b>	<b>Irregular Words</b>	<b>Non-Words</b>	<b>Passage 1</b>	<b>Passage 2</b>	<b>Passage 3</b>
Good 1 Independent	14	11	9	6	2	6	5	5
Average 2 Instructional	1	1	3	5	7	4	5	2
Poor 3 Frustration	1	4	3	2	3	2	4	3
Not Read	2	2	3	5	6	6	4	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>

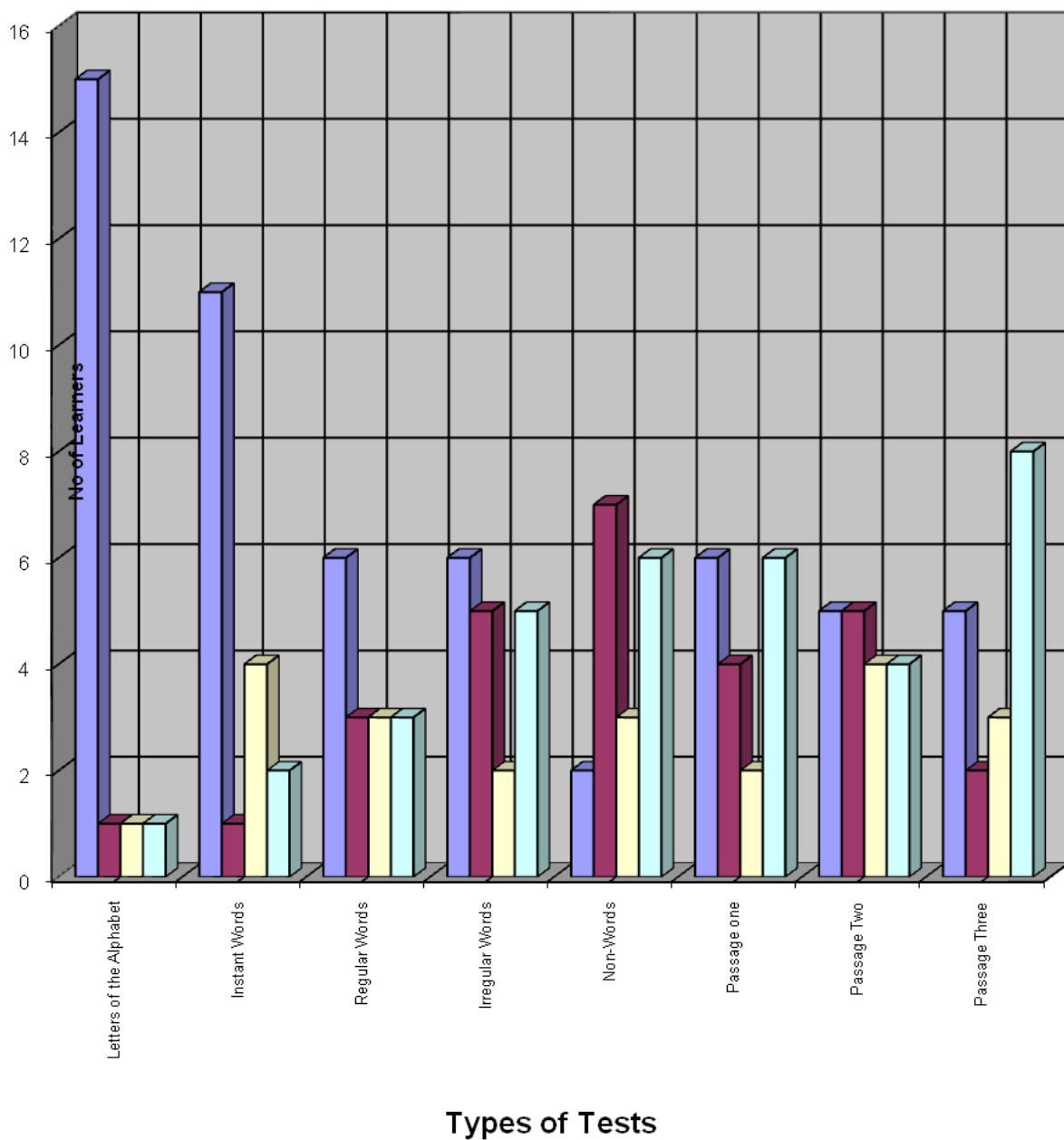
The basic assumption was that learners in Grade 3 would be able to do well in sounding, in recognizing the instant words, regular and irregular words and in reading passage 1. The non-word test was to tap on how far their word-attack skills had developed and to find out if they could divide the words into letters and sounds, and sounds into words in order to pronounce these new words. Passages 2 and 3 were used to find out how many of the learners would read without reaching the reading frustration level.

It was noticed that some learners hesitated to read instant words. These learners did not have any phonics skills at their disposal to help them to recode the words. Such learners

needed to be taught visual word recognition, and semantic cues using look and say method to teach them to recognize whole words and sentences. According to the researcher, the teachers needed to choose activities for training letter sounds, sound blending, word recognition skills and meta-cognitive strategies for reading comprehension as noted by Hengari, (2007, p. 12).

Teachers should select different approaches such as explicit teaching/direct instruction, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, partner reading, small group work and pair work. They should use easy to read books and select predictable stories with pictures to encourage literacy development (Hengari, 2007, p. 12).

### Figure 3: Reading Tests Results



Key:

■ Independent/Good

■ Instructional/Average

■ Frustration/Poor

■ Not read

1. It is clear from figure 3 that fifteen learners sounded the letters of the alphabet well and only three learners did not sound at all. One of the learners did not know any letter. When asked to say a letter or to sound it, he said anything that came to his mind. For example, when he was asked to sound the letter “b”, he sounded it as “ha” or “kwa”. Two had to look back to the letters of the alphabet in order for them to say the name of the next letter. Two moved lips first and hesitated to attack the letter.
2. Eleven learners read the instant words well, especially at the independent level while one learner could not read these words at all. Twelve learners recognised and pronounced these words correctly even though they were not presented in context. It was also observed that four learners sounded out the words into letters audibly before blending them (vocalization) and two sub-vocally (sub-vocalization) with some lip movement affected fluent reading.
3. Nine learners read the regular words well i.e. demonstrating that lexical (whole word recognition) or the sub-lexical (decoding) approach had been successful. Three learners read these words at the average level while three read the regular words poorly and three did not read them at all.
4. Eleven learners read the irregular words above the frustration levels (i.e. the learners demonstrated that they had developed some word recognition abilities). Five learners read them at the average level while two learners read these words poorly and again five learners did not read these words at all.
5. The non-word reading became challenging and nine learners read them above the frustration level. Seven read these words at the instructional level while three learners read them poorly and six learners could not read these words.
6. Reading with understanding is fundamental to the reading act. The given reading test passages gradually increased in difficulty level, starting with the easiest text. Judging from the learners’ performance for Reading Passage 1, the text could not have been too difficult as the majority (10) read above the frustration level. Only two read it poorly, but

six were unable to read it. On passage 2, ten learners read it above the frustration level, four read it at the frustration level, while another four learners were unable to read it. Passage 3 was more difficult than passages 1 and 2 and only seven learners read it above the frustration level. Two learners read it at the instructional level, three learners read it poorly, while eight were unable to read it, as the difficulty level had increased.

7. Those learners who performed at the frustration reading level and those who could not read the text with understanding were in need of assistance because they did not meet the basic competencies pertaining to read in English as a Second Language at Grade 3 level referred to earlier.

Judging from the various test results one could conclude that most learners have reading problems. Starting with the letters of the alphabet, those learners who could not sound the letters needed to learn phonics to enable them blend the letters into words. Phonics is the best known and a widely used method to teach reading and writing in English, because it enables learners to learn the letter names and sounds they make.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the collected data were analyzed and interpreted in accordance with the objectives of the study. The major findings were that the possible causes of reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners of English Second Language were the following:

The big class sizes which made it difficult for the teachers to divide their attention to all the learners. Shortage of reading materials and accessibility to the library are also among the reading difficulties identified in the study. Some other contributing factors identified in the study were irregular homework given to the learners by the teachers and the lack of parental involvement in their children's education. It was also found out that not all the children attended kindergarten and insufficient workshops for teachers. It was also noted from the interview with the parents that they needed information as to how to intervene in their children's education.

The next chapter summarizes, draws conclusions and gives recommendations on the basis of the findings of this study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a summary of the study is presented, conclusions are drawn on the basis of the research questions and findings of the study and recommendations are made.

#### 5.2 Summary

*Reading is essential to success in a society. A society suffers when citizens cannot read adequately. People with low reading levels comprise many of the unemployed, high school dropouts, the poor and those convicted of crimes. The growth of poverty and the loss of family values all show some association with poor reading (Richeck et al. 1996, p. 3).*

Parents and teachers should identify clear and specific worries concerning how well children are learning to read. Large numbers of school-aged children including children from all social classes, have significant difficulties in learning to read (Snow, Burns and Griffin 1987, p. 17). Many children in Namibia's lower primary schools lack proper reading skills and cannot read properly. Some learners have dropped from schools without acquiring necessary reading skills while others read without understanding what they read (Kuutondokwa, 2003, p. 8). This study was therefore undertaken to find out the factors that contribute to the reading difficulties experienced by the Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language at Namutuni Primary School. It was also done to find out the strategies that are used to address reading difficulties among Grade 3 primary school learners at Namutuni Primary School.

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To identify the factors which contribute to reading difficulties experienced by Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language at Namutuni Primary School.
2. To identify the aspects within the English Second Language structure which pose difficulties among Grade 3 learners and therefore contribute to the reading difficulties as experienced at Namutuni Primary School.
3. To identify strategies which are used to address reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners at Namutuni Primary School.

The major findings of the study were that some learners needed to learn letters and sounds and how to read for meaning to become good readers, while some learners also needed opportunities to practice reading with many types of books. While some children needed more intensive and systematic individualized instruction than others, all the children needed these three essential elements: (1) to learn the letters of the alphabet, (2) to sound them, and (3) to read for meaning in order to read well and independently by the end of the Third Grade. The majority of the learners sounded the letters of the alphabet well and only a few did not sound well. The majority of the learners also recognized and pronounced the instant words correctly even though they were not represented in context. Some learners read the regular words well, by demonstrating that lexical or the sub-lexical approach had been successful. Most of the learners also read irregular words above the frustration level, that is, they demonstrated that they had developed some word recognition abilities. The non-words became challenging as only a few learners could read them above the frustration level. The reading Passage 1 proved easier for these learners in that the majority read it above the frustration level. Passage 3 was the most difficult one in that only a few learners read it above the frustration level.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

On the basis of these findings, it could be concluded that most of the reading difficulties can be prevented if the followings steps are taken into consideration:

- The primary steps are to reduce the number of children who enter Grade 1 with inadequate literacy-related knowledge.
- All the children should be afforded the chance to attend kindergartens before they begin primary education.
- Poor reading was attributed to the lack of participation in pre-school programs amongst the children in this study.
- The early identification of children with reading difficulties should be considered by the teachers and parents and others such as friends, relatives or neighbours so that the children can be helped.
- Parental involvement in their children's academic development is of utmost importance, because it contributes to a sense of purpose and relevance. If parents and teachers are aware of learners with reading difficulties they can help them earlier enough to overcome the learners' reading problems.
- Formal instruction and effective teaching in reading need to focus on the development of letter sounding skills, word recognition and comprehension skills.
- The nature of reading difficulties must be identified so that effective methods are used to help affected children read (see tests results).
- Provision of sufficient and relevant reading materials should be taken into account. Teachers need to know the different reading methods. Regular reading homework should be given to enable the learners to practice the reading skills at home.

## 5.4 Recommendations

The following observations emanated from the findings of this study:

1. More workshops solely focusing on reading difficulties among the primary school learners should be conducted by the Ministry of Education, to train teachers to cope with teaching reading effectively.
2. The Ministry of Education should organize workshops to help teachers with English Language proficiency and to equip them with remedial skills which should enable them to deal with learners with reading difficulties.
3. The Ministry of Education should organize workshops or programmes for both teachers and parents, to create shared understanding of expectations concerning parental involvement in their children's education.
4. It was suggested that the Ministry of Education would have an effective programme in place, to train teachers in different reading methods. Apart from the workshops, Reading Difficulties could be integrated in the existing program in which many teachers were enrolling for further studies.
5. The Ministry of Education should provide enough reading materials to primary schools, to help the teachers to have enough resources which would enable them to prepare suitable reading lessons.
6. Teachers should avail themselves with a variety of reading materials for learners to select from.
7. Excellent instruction and effective training reading methods should be taken into account by the teachers when teaching reading. These teachers who are well-prepared, highly knowledgeable should receive ongoing support from the Ministry of Education.

8. The teacher-learner ratio should be taken into consideration when admitting learners in Grade 1. This would reduce overcrowded classes and big class sizes which hinder teachers from paying special attention to every learner in the class.
9. Parents should be encouraged by teachers to send their children to kindergartens and pre-schools before they enter Grade 1. This will reduce the high number of learners entering schools with limited proficiency in the English Language.
10. High quality pre-schools and kindergartens environment was recommended. This environment requires teachers who are well prepared, highly knowledgeable to receive ongoing support with excellent instruction and facilities.
11. The learners with reading difficulties should be identified by the teachers, parents and or by friends so that they could be assisted early enough to overcome the learner's reading problems. They should be empowered by their teachers to read different books and give them reading homework everyday. Teachers should give them incentives (praises) for every work that is well done.
12. Teachers in primary schools should be provided with necessary support to identify and teach learners with reading problems. This recommendation has financial implications for conducting productive workshops and for the training of the teachers.
13. For the teacher, an important aspect of reading skill remediation involves intervention at the learner's breakdown points. Any intervention initiative must take place with deep respect for the learners as fellow human beings.
14. Teachers should ensure that they are teaching the learners effectively.
15. To bring about change in learners' reading problems, learning support is required for them to improve in areas identified as problematic. For example, as a teacher one has to consider certain demographic characteristics, such as the use of non-standard varieties of English and limited proficiency in English.

16. Cultural differences such as mismatch between the schools and families in definitions of literacy in teaching and practice should be taken into account.
17. At the lower primary level, mother tongue or local language should be considered. Pre-primary schools are the most effective ways of preparing impoverished children for schools.

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## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A – IN – DEPTH SEMI – STRUCTURED INTERVIEW  
GUIDE FOR TEACHERS**

# UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

340 MANDUMÉ NDEMUFAYO AVENUE, PIONIERSPARK, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA  
PRIVATE BAG 13301, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA, TEL: +264+61+206 3111 FAX REGISTRAR +264 + 61 +206-3866, BURSAR +264+61+206-3704



The Teachers

My name is Ms R.N. Hartney, a Masters of Education (M.Ed) student at the University of Namibia and a teacher at Namutuni Primary School. I am conducting a research on **the reading difficulties experienced by Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language**. The purpose of my study is to investigate the factors which contribute to English as a Second Language reading difficulties among the primary school learners in Grade 3 in the Khomas Education Region. The study further wants to identify the aspects within the English as a Second Language structure that pose Grade 3 learners most reading difficulties and the study will also try to identify strategies that could be used to address reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners.

The information you provide will be informative to the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders regarding the problems faced in teaching English as a Second Language and methods to reduce these.

Your responses will be kept confidential. No one outside this project will be allowed to see your responses. Your willingness in assisting me in my research effort is highly appreciated and I thank you.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.N. Hartney', followed by a horizontal dotted line.

Ms R.N. Hartney

## TEACHERS' IN – DEPTH SEMI – STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Please write in the blank and/or tick (√) or cross (x) beside the response of your choice.

### Section A: Biographical Data

1. Your Age ..... 2. Your Sex .....
3. Your Position at School:

a) Permanent Teacher	1	
b) Temporary Teacher	2	
c) Contract Teacher	3	
d) Volunteer Teacher	4	

4. (i) Your Highest Qualification

School Certificate	1	
Teachers Diploma in Education BETD	2	
Post Graduate Qualification PGDE, BED	3	
Other (Specify)	4	

.....

### Section B – Views on English as a Second Language Reading Difficulties of the Grade 3 Learners.

5. Factors which Contribute to English Reading Difficulties of the Grade 3 Learners

Please choose one of the answers for each statement below:

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

a) **Factors within the Individual** - Indicate your choice with a tick (✓)

(i) Teachers' views on the factors within the individual learners associated with reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
All children with reading difficulties have visual-motor problems.				
If a child is diagnosed with a reading difficulty, there is likelihood that other family members will also have difficulties with reading.				

(ii) Are the problems listed below applicable to your learners?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Disorder of mind caused by accidents that have involved damage to the brain?			
Visual motor problem?			
Delayed speech?			
History of reading disability in one's family?			
Inability to process information?			
Health and emotional problems, e.g. living in a difficult environment?			
Any other family members identified to have difficulties with reading?			

(iii) List any other problems not mentioned above that are associated with reading difficulties in the primary grades.

.....

.....

.....

**b) Factors in the Home, Social and Cultural Environment.**

(i) Teachers' views on factors in the home, social and cultural environment associated with reading difficulties experienced by the Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

a) Children with limited proficiency in English are more likely to have reading difficulties.				
b) Children with pre-language impairments are more likely to have reading difficulties.				
c) Home/cultural environment in which children grow, can influence their ability to read.				

(ii) How is the parents' involvement in their children's school work, reading in particular?

.....

.....

.....

.....

**c) Factors in the School Environment**

(i) Teachers' views on the factors in the school environment associated with reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) Learners with reading difficulties are not practicing enough reading on their own to improve their reading abilities.				
b) Learners with reading difficulties do not read much in school.				
c) Teachers can contribute to reading difficulties of learners by the way they teach.				
d) The school environment can also cause English as a Second Language reading difficulties to the learners.				
e) A child who is a poor reader in Grade 1 has a greater chance of being a poor reader in later grades.				

(ii) List any other school environmental factors which can contribute to reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language:

.....

.....

.....

.....

**d) Automatic Promotion**

(i) Teachers' views on the policy of automatic promotion associated with reading difficulties experienced by the Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language.

(ii) How is the system of “automatic promotion” done at your school? Choose from the statements below: (Circle the answer).

1. Learners should meet performance standard and academic requirements for them to be promoted.
2. It is a must that all learners should be promoted.
3. Learners are promoted with their age peers regardless of their academic performance.
4. Other (State):

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

(ii)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Automatic promotion is one of the contributing factors to reading difficulties of the Grade 3 learners.				
2. Automatic promotion policy enhances quality education in Namibia.				

3. Please motivate your answer in (b) above:

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

4. How does the system of automatic promotion affect reading among the Grade 3 learners?

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

**e) Teaching Methods**

My teaching experience for Grade 3 is: Please tick (√).

a) Less than 1 year	1	
b) 1 – 3 years	2	
c) 4 – 6 years	3	
d) 6 and above	4	
e) Other	5	

2. Please list some of the teaching methods/approaches/theories and classroom activities you use when teaching English as a Second Language reading.

Methods	Activities
A	
B	
C	
D	

3. Tell what method(s) are useful for teaching and learning to read.

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

4. Tell which reading materials are useful for teaching and learning to read.

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

5. What are the learners' attitudes towards reading in general?

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

6. What are the learners with reading difficulties attitude towards reading?

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

7. What part of the reading lesson do learners enjoy (pre-, during or post reading)?

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

8. What reading method(s) do you encourage to improve your learners' reading skills?

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

9. Why do you encourage that specific method(s)? Please explain

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

10. On my reading instruction I always put more emphasis on:

	Yes	No
Letter – sound (phonics)		
Letter differentiation		
Fluency and reading problems		
Pronunciation		
Spelling		
Comprehension		

11. How does the medium of instruction used at your school affect reading abilities of learners at lower primary level? Motivate.

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

12.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Poorly trained Teachers in effective methods of teaching beginning readers is one of the factors contributing to reading problems among learners.				

18. From your point of view what other factors other than those mentioned above may have contributed to English as a Second Language reading difficulties experienced by learners at the primary level? Explain.

.....

.....

.....

.....

**6. The Aspects within the English Second Language Structure that Pose Difficulties among the Grade 3 Learners and therefore Contributing to Reading Difficulties Experienced at Namutuni Primary School.**

a) What components of English as a Second Language do you as a teacher complain as difficult to teach?

Components	Yes	No	Reasons
Writing			
Speaking			
Reading			
Listening			
None of the above			
All of the above			

b) What part of reading do you mostly experience difficult with your learners?

Letter-sounding (phonics)	1	
---------------------------	---	--

Pronunciation	2	
Spelling	3	
Figure ground (skipping some letter, words or lines)	4	

c) How do the Grade 3 learners perform in other subjects (e.g. Maths, Spelling, Handwriting and Environmental Studies)?

.....

.....

.....

**7. Strategies that could be Used to Address Reading Difficulties of Grade 3 Learners of English as a Second Language.**

(i) How regular do you give reading homework to your learners?

.....

(ii) Does your school have a library?

Yes	1	
No	2	

(iii) If yes, how do you use the library to improve learners' reading?

.....

.....

.....

(iv) If your answer is "No" how do you ensure extra or supplementary reading by the learners? Please explain.

.....

.....

.....

(v) Does your school use the following in teaching reading?

Equipment	Yes	No
Audio Visual Materials e.g. Video Machine		
Television		
Overhead Project (OHP)		
Audio Materials e.g. Tape Recorder		
Enough supply of English Newspapers & Magazines		
Other (specify)		

(vi) How often do you receive English as a Second Language reading instructional advice from the subject advisor or facilitator?

Weekly	1	
Monthly	2	
Termly	3	
Yearly	4	
Not at all	5	
Other (Specify)	6	

(vii) How often are you invited to attend a training workshop on English as a Second Language?

Weekly	1	
Monthly	2	
Termly	3	
Yearly	4	
Not at all	5	
Other	6	

(viii) What strategies do you think could be used to address English as a Second Language reading difficulties of Grade 3 learners?

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

(ix) What are your expectations from the following stakeholders in addressing reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners?

1. Parents

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

2. Ministry of Education

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

(x) Your final words on how to improve reading performance by your learners.

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

**Thank you for your help.**

**APPENDIX B1 - AN INVITATION LETTER TO THE  
PARENTS**

# UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

340 MANDUME NDEMUFAYO AVENUE, PIONIERSPARK, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA  
PRIVATE BAG 13301, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA, TEL: +264+61+206 3111 FAX REGISTRAR +264 + 61 +206-3866, BURSAR +264+61+206-3704



## AN INVITATION LETTER FOR AN INTERVIEW ABOUT: INVESTIGATING READING DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE OF GRADE 3 LEARNERS IN ONE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE KHOMAS EDUCATION REGION OF NAMIBIA.

Dear Parent (s)/ Guardian (s)

My name is Ms R.N. Hartney, a Masters of Education (M.Ed.) student at the University of Namibia and a teacher at Namutuni Primary School. I am conducting a survey on: **Investigating reading difficulties in English Second Language of Grade 3 learners in one primary school in the Khomas Education Region of Namibia** : The purpose of my study is to investigate the factors which contribute to English as a Second Language reading difficulties among the primary school learners in Grade 3 in Khomas Education Region. The study further wants to identify the aspects within the English Second Language structure that pose Grade 3 learners most reading difficulties. The study will also try to seek and identify strategies that could be used to address difficulties among the Grade 3 learners.

Your child.....in Grade 3..... has been selected as one of the children to take part in this study at school. Therefore, you also have been selected to participate in this study, thus your opinion will represent the opinions of thousands of people much like yourselves. Could you please grant me few minutes by coming to your child's school on Thursday the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2008 any time between 14h00 -18h00.

The information you provide will be informative to the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders regarding the problems facing in teaching English as a Second Language and methods to reduce them. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Your willingness in assisting me in my research effort is highly appreciated and I thank you.

Thank you once again for your time.

Yours faithfully

  
Ms R.N. Hartney

**APPENDIX B2 - AN INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR  
PARENTS**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS**

**AN INTERVIEW ABOUT: INVESTIGATING READING DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE OF GRADE 3 LEARNERS IN ONE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE KHOMAS EDUCATION REGION OF NAMIBIA.**

**A – Biographical Data**

- 1. Age ..... 2. Sex .....
- 3. Occupation .....
- 4. (i) Highest Qualification:

Not been to school	1	
Primary education	2	
Grade 10 up to 12	3	
College	4	
University	5	

- (ii) If “other”, specify.

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

**B: Views on English as a Second Language Reading Difficulties among the Grade 3 Learners**

**Factors which Contribute to English Reading Difficulties of Grade 3 Learners**

1. What do you think are the factors which contribute to English reading difficulties of Grade 3 learners?

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

2. Did your child attend Kindergarten or pre-school?

.....

**Strategies that could be Used to Address Reading Difficulties among Grade 3 Learners**

1. (i) Do you have reading materials for your child at home?

.....

(ii) If your answer is “No”, please explain how do you ensure extra or supplementary reading by your child?

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

2. How regularly does your child get homework from school?

Every day	1	
Two times a work	2	
Once a week	3	
Not at all	4	

3. (i) Who assists your child with his/her reading?

Him/herself	1	
sister/brother	2	
father/mother	3	
neighbour/friend	4	
Other	5	

- a)
- b)
- c)

d)

(ii) If you answered “Other”, specify.

.....  
.....

4. What are your expectations from teachers and the Ministry of Education in addressing reading difficulties among the Grade 3 learners?

i. Teachers

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

ii. The Ministry of Education

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

5. Please any other comments on reading improvement:

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

**Thank you for your help.**

**APPENDIX C - A LETTER OF PERMISSION TO THE DIRECTOR  
TO CARRY OUT THE RESEARCH**

# UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

340 MANDUME NDEMUFAYO AVENUE, PIONERSPARK, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA  
PRIVATE BAG 13301, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA, TEL: +264+61+206 3111 FAX REGISTRAR +264 + 61 +206-3866, BURSAR +264+61+206-3704



University of Namibia

Private Bag 13301

WINDHOEK

March 06, 2006

Tel. 061 – 261421 (w)

Cell 081 2631632

Fax 061 – 247175

The Regional Director  
Khomas Education Region  
Private Bag 13236  
WINDHOEK

Dear Madam

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT MY M.EDUCATION (MASTERS OF  
EDUCATION) STUDY IN THE KHOMAS REGION**

I hereby wish to seek your permission with regards to carrying out an academic study in the Khomas Education Region. This research will serve as a partial fulfillment for my M.Ed. studies at the University of Namibia.

The study is titled “ **Investigating reading difficulties in English Second Language of Grade 3 learners in one primary school in the Khomas Education Region of Namibia**”. I have chosen this region for this study because it is where I serve as a teacher and because it is nearer for me to reach the school.

*Among other areas, this study intends to look at components of reading difficulties Grade 3 learners encounter as well as the methods the teachers employ in their teaching of English reading. It will also gather perceived reasons for instructional difficulties in teaching reading English Second Language to Grade 3 learners.*

The significance of this study is to discover reading difficulties of English as a Second Language among Grade 3 learners, which will sensitize parents and the Ministry of Education of the importance of reading at the lower primary level and create an awareness of the use of effective reading methods. The implication here is that even performance of learners in other subjects would be enhanced, as improvement in reading English would mean better performance in other subjects they will be taught in English at the next grades.

All the data collected from the teachers, learners and parents will be treated confidentially. I commit myself to provide you with the final thesis of this research.

Yours faithfully



**Ms R.N. Hartney**

cc      **Mr Ankama V.**  
**Permanent Secretary: Ministry of Education**

**APPENDIX D - PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT THE RESEARCH  
FROM THE DIRECTOR**





REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
KHOMAS REGION

Tel: (09 264 61) 2939411  
Fax: (09 264 61) 231367

Private Bag 13236  
Windhoek

File No: 12/2/4/4/2

April 26, 2006

Ms Rauha Nehafo Hartney  
P.O. Box 60195  
KATUTURA  
Windhoek

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY/RESEARCH IN OUR  
SCHOOLS

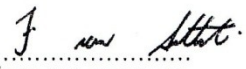
Your letter of the above mentioned request has reference.

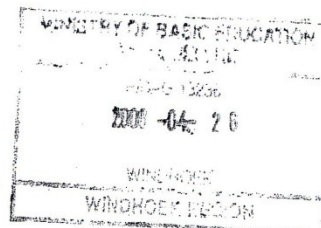
You are hereby given permission to conduct a research on "an investigation of the reading difficulties experienced by Grade 3 learners of English as a second language in the Khomas Education Region" at the three identified schools: Tobias Hainyeko ; Martti Ahtisaari and A.I. Steenkamp Primary Schools on condition that:

- a) arrangements should be made with the Principal before hand
- b) those teachers who will be interviewed should do so voluntarily
- c) the interview should not disrupt the school programme/classes
- d) a copy of the final report should be provided to the Khomas Education Region

We wish you success in your research.

Yours sincerely

  
MS C.U. TJIKUUA  
DIRECTOR: KHOMAS REGION



**APPENDIX E - A LETTER OF PERMISSION TO THE  
PRINCIPAL TO CARRY OUT THE  
RESEARCH**

# UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

340 MANDUME NDEMUFAYO AVENUE, PIONERSPARK, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA  
PRIVATE BAG 13301, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA, TEL: +264+61+206 3111 FAX REGISTRAR +264 + 61 +206-3866, BURSAR +264+61+206-3704



University of Namibia

Private Bag 13301

WINDHOEK

June 06, 2008

Tel. 061 – 261421 (w)

Cell 081 2631632

Fax 061 – 247175

The Principal  
Namutuni Primary School  
P.O. Box 7007  
KATUTURA  
WINDHOEK

Dear Madam

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT MY M.EDUCATION (MASTERS OF  
EDUCATION) STUDY AT YOUR SCHOOL**

I hereby wish to seek your permission with regards to carrying out an academic study in the Khomas Education Region. This research will serve as a partial fulfillment for my M.Ed. studies at University of Namibia.

The study is titled **“Investigating reading difficulties in English Second Language of Grade 3 learners in one primary school in the Khomas Education Region of Namibia”**. I have chosen this region for this study because it is where I serve as a teacher and because it’s nearer for me to reach the school.

*Among other areas, this study intends to look at components of reading difficulties the Grade 3 learners encounter as well as the methods the teachers employ in their teaching of English reading. It will also gather perceived reasons for instructional difficulties in teaching reading English Second Language to the Grade 3 learners.*

The significance of this study is to discover reading difficulties of English as a Second Language among Grade 3 learners, which will sensitize parents and the Ministry of Education about the importance of reading at the lower primary level and create an awareness of the use of 0effective reading methods. The implication here is that even performance of learners in other subjects would be enhanced, as improvement in reading English would mean better performance in other subjects they will be taught in English at the next grades.

All the data collected from the teachers, learners and parents will be treated confidentially. I commit myself to provide you with the final thesis of this research.

Yours faithfully

  
Ms R.N. Hartney

**APPENDIX F - PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT THE  
RESEARCH FROM THE PRINCIPAL**



## Namutuni Senior Primary School

P.O. Box 7007 Katutura Republic of Namibia  
Tel: (061) 261421 Fax: (061) 247175

30 June 2008

To: Mrs R. Hartney

Dear Madam

### PERMISSION TO DO YOUR RESEARCH

I hereby grant permission to Mrs. RN. Hartney to carry out her study at the above mentioned school on condition that:

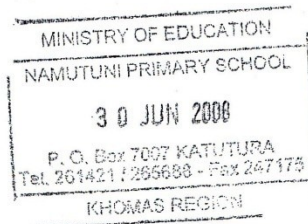
- a) It should not interfere with your school work
- a) No disturbance will cause to the teaching and learning of the selected learners.
- b) Take discipline into account.
- c) Make thoroughly arrangements with the teachers for Grade 3; so that you can utilize the same time learners have to read in they respective classes.
- d) Approach the teachers and the parents concern in a humble way to assist you by answering your questionnaires.

I wish you all the best in your study.

Thank you in advance.

*Mrs. M. Alweendo*

Mrs. M. Alweendo  
PRINCIPAL



**APPENDIX G1 - READING MATERIALS**

## Reading Materials

### Reading Test

*The reading test for Grade 3 learners will consist of:*

1. Letters of the alphabet (letter sounds)
2. Instant/Sight word reading
3. Single word reading
4. Regular words (one and two syllables)
5. Irregular words (one and two syllables)
6. Non-word reading (one and two syllables) non-words
7. Reading Passages (levels 1 – 3)

The following will be tested:

1. Letter-sound matching problem (phoneme/phonics)
2. (i) Word identification (pronunciation)  
(ii) Word recognition (by sight without or with the aid of word analysis).
3. Figure ground and reading problem (fluency/speed)
4. (i) Decoding (ability to take words in print and change them to spoken words).  
(ii) Reading efficiency (Comprehension – the ability of approaching every reading task with a clear purpose and with flexibility to adjust reading strategy to the purpose at hand).

**APPENDIX G2 - LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET**

*Reading Assessment Task One: Letters of the Alphabet:  
Learners are expected to sound the Letters of the Alphabet.*

Aa	Bb	Cc	Dd	Ee	Ff
Gg	Hh	Ii	Jj	Kk	Ll
Mm	Nn	Oo	Pp	Qq	Rr
Ss	Tt	Uu	Vv	Ww	Xx
Yy	Zz				

Adapted from: The Alphabet in a Rainbow Shape (Walton 1998, p. 106).

**APPENDIX G3 - INSTANT WORDS**

## 1 Reading Assessment Task Two: Instant Words

is	am	she	do
of	I	her	did
and	be	so	make
to	at	them	people
it	this	then	called
in	his	like	now
he	there	into	about
you	they	time	out
me	all	has	when
for	were	one	where
was	each	two	what
as	with	water	who
are	what	eggs	how
look	take	these	many
long	write	pen	chair

Words in every day usage.

Adapted from: (McDowall 1979, p. 9).

**APPENDIX G4 - SINGLE WORD READING**

**Reading Assessment Task Three: Single Word Reading**  
**Regular Words (One and Two Syllable)**

hide	lemon	bought
basket	friend	watch
night	carton	slot

**Irregular Words (One & Two Syllable)**

blood	twins
aunt	naughty
love	course
tongue	island
bubble	porridge

Adapted from: (Funnel and Stuart 1995, p. 100).

**APPENDIX G5 - NON-WORD READING**

**Reading Assessment Task Four: Non-word Reading**

**One and Two Syllable Non-words:**

plood

aund

dign

pove

tongue

tubble

borridge

dwins

fource

taughty

Adapted from: (Funnel and Stuart 1995, p. 105) Learning to Read.

**APPENDIX G6 - READING PASSAGES**

## **Reading Assessment Task Five: Reading Passages – Level One**

**Read it as loud as you can. I'll ask you some questions at the end.**

### **The Shikongo Family**

This is Peter's family. Peter's parents are Mr and Mrs Shikongo. Mr Shikongo is a mechanic and Mrs Shikongo is a nurse. Peter is helpful. He likes helping his mother and father.

Peter has two brothers and two sisters. He has a big sister. Her name is Sylvia. She is very kind and she works in a shop. Peter also has a big brother. His big brother is called Thomas. Thomas is twelve and he is rather lazy. Peter's little brother and sister are Matheus and Helena. They are twins and they are five years old. They are sometimes naughty.

Peter's Uncle Kavari is a clerk and he works in an office. Uncle Kavari is very friendly.

### **2 Questions**

1. Who is Peter's father?
2. What type of job does Mrs Shikongo do?
3. Where does Sylvia work?
4. Who is lazy in the family?
5. Who are the two twins' names.

(New Nampep. Grade 3 Learner's Book, Ward 1992, p. 3).

**Level 2: Read this story aloud. When you finish I shall ask you some questions.**

### **A visit to Aunt Maria**

Thomas got into a lorry. It went very fast along the road. Thomas was happy. The lorry stopped outside the shop. “Please help me, Thomas”, said Mr. Simataa

There were a lot of vegetables on the lorry. There were potatoes, onions, carrots, cabbages and tomatoes. Mr. Simataa and Thomas carried all the vegetables in the shop. Then they got back to the lorry. But the lorry did not turn right. It went straight on.

“Where are we going?” Thomas asked Mr. Simataa. “We are going to town,” said Mr. Simataa. I must get some fruit. You must help me.” Thomas helped Mr. Simataa to carry the fruit. He carried oranges, bananas and apples. They were very heavy. Mr. Simataa and Thomas carried all the fruit into the shop. Now Thomas was very hot and tired.

“Now I’ll take you home,” said Mr. Simataa.

“But I want to go to my Aunt Maria’s house,” said Thomas.

“I’m sorry Thomas,” said Mr. Simataa, “I’m not going that way”.

So Thomas was very angry with Mr. Simataa. He walked along the road to his Aunt Maria’s house. He was hungry and thirsty. Mr. Simataa did not give him something to eat. His feet and his head hurt.

At half past eleven he arrived at Aunt Maria’s house. Peter and Sylvia laughed when they saw Thomas. Thomas was not happy. He was fed up.

**Questions:**

1.

Who was visited by Thomas?

- b. Name all the vegetables sold in the shop in town?
- c. Whose vegetables were sold in the shop?
- d. Apart from vegetables what else were sold in the shop?
- e. What time did Thomas arrive at Aunt Maria's house?
- f. Why was Thomas not happy?

(New Nampep. Grade 3 Learner's Book, Ward, 1992, p. 5).

**Level 3: Read this story aloud. When you finish I shall ask you some questions.**

### **The Surprise**

Peter walked to his Aunt Maria's house. He met some friends. They were playing football.

"Do you want to play football, Peter?" they shouted.

But Peter did not stop. "No, thank you," he shouted back. At last he arrived at Aunt Maria's house. "Hello, Peter," she said, "come inside."

"Thank you," said Peter.

Aunt Maria looked at Peter. "What's the matter?" she asked.

"I'm fed up," said Peter. "Thomas is always laughing at me. Sylvia is angry with me and I've torn my jersey."

"But you didn't like your jersey," said Aunt Maria.

"I know," said Peter, "but Mother and Father will be angry."

"Do you want some milk?" said Aunt Maria.

"No, thank you. I'm not ..." Peter started to say, but he was very thirsty. "Yes, please," he said.

"Good," said Aunt Maria. "Drink your milk. And then I have a surprise for you."

Peter drank his milk. He put his empty glass on the table. Then Aunt Maria went to the cupboard. She opened the cupboard and took out a parcel. She gave the parcel to Peter.

Peter felt the parcel. Was it a book? No, it was too soft. Was it a pair of socks? No, it was too big.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Open it and see!" Aunt Maria said.

Peter opened the parcel. Inside the parcel there was something very soft. It is an orange.

It was ..... Peter's eyes were very big.

"It's a jersey!" said Peter in a very small voice. "Is it for me?"

"Yes, of course it is," said Aunt Maria. "Put it on." So Peter put on his new jersey.

"Good," said Aunt Maria. "It's not too big and it's not too small."

“And it isn’t scratchy at all!” shouted Peter.

“You can take it off now,” said Aunt Maria

“Oh no!” said Peter. “I’m never going to take it off. Thank you, Aunt Maria. Thank you very much!”

### **3 Questions**

1. What were Peter’s friends he met doing?
2. What did Aunt Maria give to Peter to drink?
3. What did Peter think was in the parcel?
4. What did Peter think was in the parcel when he felt it?
5. Why could Peter not believe that it can be a pair of socks?

Adapted from: (New Nampep. Grade 3 Learners’ Book, Ward 1992, p. 92).

**APPENDIX H - SCORING KEY FOR DIFFERENT TESTS**

**Letters of the Alphabet Scoring Key:**

At least 20 letters sounded correct	1
Between 10 and 19 letters sounded correct	2
Fewer than 10 letters sounded or letter names correct	3

**Instant Word Scoring Key:**

At least 30 of these words correct	1
Between 15 and 29 words correct	2
Fewer than 15 words correct	3

**Single Word and Non-word Scoring Key:**

If 2 words wrong	1
If 3 or 4 words wrong	2
If more than 4 words wrong	3

**APPENDIX I - READING PASSAGES SCORING KEYS**

### **Reading Passages Scoring Key:**

The following details were captured during the reading process and the learners had to answer questions based on the passage read. The difficulty level of the passage was arranged progressively from easy to more difficult with passage three being the most challenging. If a child did this or the following:

- Reads the word accurately, do nothing or check off each word
- If a learner couldn't say a word, after several seconds, it was said for him/her and marked an asterisk (\*) every time help was provided (hesitation). It counted a mistake.
- To mark the miscue errors, what the learner said was written above or beside the word. (substitution). It counted a mistake.
- If a learner omitted a word, the text word omitted was circled. (omitted). It counted a mistake.
- If a learner added a word, a word added was written above where s/he said it and marked with a caret (^) (Inserting word). It counted a mistake.
- If the learner made a self-correction, what s/he said was written first and "SC" above the word showed it was self corrected. (It would not count a mistake)
- After each comprehension question what the learner said was written down.
- The learner was asked to read all three passages unless there were more than two errors every ten words. If the learner made that many errors, the story was finished, and the next one was not given.

If the learner was able to recognize about 95 % of the words and to answer 90 % of the comprehension questions correctly (independent reading level).	1
If the learner was able to recognise about 90 % of the words, with a comprehension score about 70 % (Instructional reading level).	2
If the learner was able to recognise fewer than 90 % of the words, with a comprehension score of less than 70 % and did not understand the material. (Frustration reading level).	3

(Adapted from: [www.readingrockets.org/article/3415](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/3415))

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 24/09/08

Name: Rachel Jonas

Grade: 3 B

Age: 11

Sex: Female

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Trying to sound them, but with hesitation

Instant words: Trying to sound and blend

Regular words: Word for word sounding, time consuming letter sound relation is weak, lip movement

Irregular words: slow, sounding in hesitant to blend the sounds. Read some of the first letter only

Non-words: No sense, here difficulties

Passage 1: Read slow, no comprehension, read words known but very limited could not continue beyond passage

Passage 2: lip movement, no sense

Passage 3: stopped

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 24/09/08

Name: Iyaloo Mutilifa

Grade: 3B

Age: 11

Sex: Female

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Sounded fairly most of the letters but very slow and with difficulties

Instant words: word for word sounding, time consuming, tough to proceed to the regular words

Regular words: Only the first letter of each word mentioned

Irregular words: could not continue beyond instant words, trying to compare others tried earlier

Non-words: Stopped reading

Passage 1: No sense in reading

Passage 2:

Passage 3:

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 25/09/08

Name: Anna Simeon

Grade: 3 C

Age: 9

Sex: Female

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Well sounded, fast

Instant words: Well read, fast

Regular words: Well read, self corrected

Irregular words: fairly read with hesitation in attacking words

Non-words: fairly read, trying to sound blend here

Passage 1: Well read: self correcting, inserting but with comprehension

Passage 2: Fairly read, hesitant in some words but with fairly comprehension

Passage 3: Well read with fairly comprehension

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 25/09/08

Name: Willem Juuso

Grade: 3 C

Age: 9

Sex: Male

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Unable to sound, could only say letter names, could blend

Instant words: well read

Regular words: well read

Irregular words: fairly read but a bit hesitant

Non-words: read with difficulties, hesitant to attack the words, self correction

Passage 1: fairly read, noted punctuation marks, at times ignoring and reading sentences on continuously but with comprehension

Passage 2: Well read with comprehension

Passage 3: Well read with comprehension

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 24/09/08

Name: William Nghidimondjila

Grade: 3 A

Age: 9

Sex: Male

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Well sounded

Instant words: Well read

Regular words: Well read

Irregular words: Well read

Non-words: Fairly read

Passage 1: Well read with comprehension

Passage 2: Well read with comprehension

Passage 3: Well read with comprehension

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 25/09/08

Name: Chriszelda Vryman

Grade: 3 A

Age: 9

Sex: Female

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Well sounded, fast

Instant words: Well read

Regular words: Well read

Irregular words: Well read

Non-words: fairly read

Passage 1: Well read with good comprehension

Passage 2: Well read with good comprehension

Passage 3: Well read with good comprehension

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 25/09/08

Name: Anneli Joseph

Grade: 3 B

Age: 9

Sex: Female

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Well sounded, but slow and carefully

Instant words: Well read

Regular words: Well read

Irregular words: Well read

Non-words: Fairly read

Passage 1: Well read, careful with pronunciation and comprehension

Passage 2: Well read with comprehension

Passage 3: Well read with fairly comprehension

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 25/09/08

Name: Nancy Ndameshime

Grade: 3 C

Age: 9

Sex: Female

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Well sounded, fast tempo

Instant words: Well read with fast tempo

Regular words: Well read

Irregular words: Well read

Non-words: Well read

Passage 1: Well read, punctuation marks, well used, fluent, self monitoring with comprehension

Passage 2: Well read, fluent with comprehension

Passage 3: Well read with comprehension

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 23/09/08

Name: Walde Simeon

Grade: 3 C

Age: 9

Sex: Male

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Well sounded

Instant words: Well read

Regular words: Well read

Irregular words: Well read

Non-words: A bit difficult, trying to sound and blend

Passage 1: Fairly read, punctuation marks not used effectively, slow reading tempo but not affecting comprehension

Passage 2: Slow, but fairly read with comprehension

Passage 3: Read very well here, try to adhere to punctuation marks, with comprehension

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 26/09/08

Name: Mwapopile Kondombolo

Grade: 3 C

Age: 9

Sex: Female

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Well sounded

Instant words: Well read

Regular words: Well read

Irregular words: Well read

Non-words: well read

Passage 1: Well read with comprehension

Passage 2: Well read with comprehension

Passage 3: Well read, with fairly comprehension

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 28/09/08

Name: Elvis Iitula

Grade: 3 B

Age: 11

Sex: Male

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Well sounded

Instant words: Fairly read with errors

Regular words: Could not continue beyond instant words

Irregular words: poorly read, with the sounding effort lacking parsing

Non-words: Poorly read, errors showing efforts sharing, letters with the target words

Passage 1: Poorly read with substitution, omissions resulting in poor comprehension

Passage 2: no sense

Passage 3:

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 24/09/08

Name: Rooi Uricht

Grade: 3 A

Age: 11

Sex: Male

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Many letters sounded well, but very slow and with difficulties had to look back in order to sound the next letter

Instant words: Unable to sound them. No sense in what is read, words known very limited

Regular words: no sense

Irregular words: One word read unexpectedly "love" others, no sense

Non-words: could not read beyond instant words, have difficulties

Passage 1: made no sense

Passage 2:

Passage 3:

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 23/09/08

Name: Gotlieb Iyambo

Grade: 3 C

Age: 9

Sex: Male

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Sounded well

Instant words: well read

Regular words: Fairly read

Irregular words: Fairly read

Non-words: Fairly read

Passage 1: Well read with good comprehension

Passage 2: well read with fair comprehension

Passage 3: Fairly read with good comprehension

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 23/09/08

Name: Patricia Kahuika

Grade: 3 A

Age: 10

Sex: Female

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Letter names mentioned correct but unable to sound them, severe difficulties

Instant words: No word attack skill learned

Regular words: could not continue beyond instant words

Irregular words:

Non-words:

Passage 1:

Passage 2:

Passage 3:

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 23/09/08

Name: Kullah Auene

Grade: 3 A

Age: 9

Sex: Female

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Unable to sound the letters but knew them by their names

Instant words: Well read

Regular words: Well read

Irregular words: Fairly read

Non-words: Fairly read

Passage 1: Read through with comprehension

Passage 2: Read through with comprehension

Passage 3: Fairly read with little comprehension

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 23/09/08

Name: Johannes Natanael

Grade: 3 B

Age: 9

Sex: Male

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Sounded well

Instant words: Well read

Regular words: Trying to blend not fluent

Irregular words: Letter sound relation weak labouring sounding each letter before sounding blending it

Non-words: Could not read beyond

Passage 1:

Passage 2:

Passage 3:

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 26/09/08

Name: Albertina Johannes

Grade: 3 B

Age: 9

Sex: Female

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Well sounded

Instant words: Well read

Regular words: Well read

Irregular words: Well read

Non-words: Read with difficulty trying to sound and blend

Passage 1: Fairly read slow but with comprehension

Passage 2: Read with comprehension

Passage 3: Fairly read, slow pace, ignoring punctuation marks, with fairly understanding.

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Date of Assessment: 26/09/08

Name: Ricky Shikongo

Grade: 3 C

Age: 10

Sex: Male

### **Comments:**

Letters of the alphabet: Only few, poorly sounded

Sight words: Poorly read, sounding known letters in a word

Regular words: Poorly read with attempts – showing initials letters in common with the target word. Refusals noted for almost all words.

Irregular words: Not read, sounded a few known letters only.

Non-words: Not read

Passage 1: Could not read it

Passage 2:

Passage 3:

**APPENDIX L - PICTURE CARDS ALPHABET**

*APPENDIX M - INSTRUMENTS*







