

INVESTIGATING FACTORS THAT HINDER READING COMPREHENSION IN  
ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS: A CASE OF  
SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE KAVANGO WEST REGION,  
NAMIBIA

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF  
MASTER OF EDUCATION (CURRICULUM INSTRUCTION AND  
ASSESSMENT STUDIES)

OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

BY  
ALPHEUS NGOMA NAIRENGE

9601538

APRIL 2025

MAIN SUPERVISOR: DR. LUKAS H. JULIUS

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

CO-SUPERVISOR: MS. TERTISIA N. NGHIPONDOKA

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

## **ABSTRACT**

The main aim of this research was to investigate the multifaceted factors that impede reading comprehension in English Second Language of Grade Four learners using a case of selected primary schools in the Kavango West region, in Namibia. Strong reading comprehension skills are fundamental to understanding and mastering academic content across all subjects, however, many English teachers at the Lower Primary Phase face challenges in teaching reading comprehension fluently. This study adopts a qualitative research method to investigate the interplay of socio-economic, instructional and individual variables. The researcher used non-probability sampling, that is, convenience and judgmental sampling. The total sample size was ten Grade 4 English Language teachers. Through extensive literature review, classroom observations and structured interviews, the research identifies key findings such as limited access to reading resources, ineffective teaching methodologies and diverse learner backgrounds. Some of the challenges that teachers faced when teaching reading comprehension were ascribed to a lack of reading materials in English accessible to all learners. Additionally, a lack of self-efficacy was also noted as teachers felt frustrated in implementing reading strategies because of heavy workloads and parents' limited involvement with their children's schoolwork. The findings of this research offer valuable insights into the nuanced barriers faced by Grade 4 learners, enabling educators, policymakers and stakeholders to implement targeted interventions. Some of the interventions recommended in this research include more varied teaching approaches to be applied when teaching. The research further recommends that teachers need to be patient when teaching learners how to read comprehension so that they attend to all the learners' needs, whether highfliers or slow learners. The government should build more schools and classrooms to prevent the overcrowding of classrooms.

**Keywords:** *reading comprehension, English Second Language, factors, Grade 4 learners.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who made this research project a dream come true. This research project is indebted to The Faculty of Education at UNAM. The professional and intellectual guidance given by my supervisor Dr Julius Lukas and co-supervisor Ms Tertisia Ndinela Nghipondoka is second to none. This project would not have been completed without their patience, dedication and ingenious ideas. My gratitude also goes to my family members particularly my two daughters Regina Nairenge and Annamary Nairenge and their brother Alpheus Nairenge Muhafereni Nairenge for their unwavering support. To my research participants, friends and colleagues, thank you for sacrificing your time to attend to the demands of this research project. It is an honour to have completed this research project in compliance with the provisions of the *Master of Education (Curriculum Instruction and Assessment Studies)*.

## **DEDICATION**

To my fiancée who taught me well the meaning of the word ‘persistence’, and to those who trust in me. Words are not enough to express my gratitude for the unwavering support you continually gave me. You are my pillar of strength and source of encouragement.

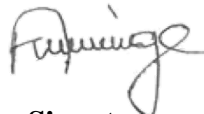
Once again this research is sincerely dedicated to my supportive mother Regina Nairenge who encouraged and inspired me to conduct this study. She never left my side throughout the process and gave me strength and hope when I thought of giving this up. She provided me with a great sense of enthusiasm and perseverance in continuing this. Without her love and assistance, this research project would not have been possible.

Lastly, I dedicate this research paper to the almighty God who gives me strength, wisdom, guidance, power of thinking, security, and competence, and for giving me good health while doing this. All of these, I offer to you.

## **DECLARATION**

I, Alpheus Ngoma Nairenge, hereby declare that this study is my own work and is a true reflection of my research, and that this work, or any part thereof has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution. No part of this thesis/dissertation may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by means (e.g. electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior permission of the author, or The University of Namibia in that behalf. I, Alpheus Ngoma Nairenge, grant The University of Namibia the right to reproduce this thesis in whole or in part, in any manner or format, which The University of Namibia may deem fit.

Alpheus Ngoma Nairenge



April 2025

**Name of Student**

**Signature**

**Date**

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND/OR ACRONYMS**

ESL	-	English as a Second Language
MoEAC	-	Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
SES	-	Socio-economic status
LPP	-	Language Proficiency Program
UNAM	-	University of Namibia
ESL	-	English Second Language
DEC	-	Decentralized Ethics Committee
TESL	-	Teaching English Second Language
SLA	-	Second Language Acquisition

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Participants' gender.....	42
Figure 2: Participants' age .....	42
Figure3: Participants' level of education.....	43
Figure 4: Participants' Working experience.....	44
Figure 5: Sample of learner's script.....	60

## **Table of Contents**

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	i
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	iii
<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	iv
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND/OR ACRONYMS</b> .....	v
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	vi
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
<b>1.0 Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>1.1. Background of the study</b> .....	1
<b>1.2 Statement of the problem</b> .....	4
<b>1.3 Research questions</b> .....	5
<b>1.4 Significance of the study</b> .....	5
<b>1.5. Limitations of the study</b> .....	5
<b>1.6 Definition of terms</b> .....	6
<b>Reading comprehension-</b> .....	7
<b>English as a Second Language (ESL or TESL)</b> .....	7
<b>1.7 Chapter summary</b> .....	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	8
<b>2.1 Introduction</b> .....	8
<b>2.2. Second language acquisition in the educational landscape</b> .....	8
<b>2.3 The influence of learners' first language on second language acquisition</b> .....	10
<b>2.4 Teachers' role in promoting learners' second language acquisition.</b> .....	16
<b>2.5 Theoretical Framework</b> .....	22
<b>2.6 Concept of reading comprehension</b> .....	24
<b>2.8 Teaching methods of reading</b> .....	27
<b>2.8.1 Phonics method</b> .....	27

2.8.2 Whole language method .....	28
2.8.3 The look and say method.....	29
2.8.4 The shared reading method .....	30
2.9 Difficulties that reader encounter in reading comprehension tasks.....	31
2.10 Factors affecting reading ability .....	35
2.10.1 Home environment.....	35
2.10.2 Socio-economic status (SES) .....	36
2.10.3 Inadequate reading instruction.....	37
2.10.4 The school environment .....	38
2.10.5 Lack of self-efficacy .....	39
2.10.6 Heavy workloads.....	40
2.10.7 Parents' limited involvement .....	40
2.10.8 Discipline and behaviour problems .....	41
2.10.9 Cultural factors .....	41
2.11 Psychological and cognitive aspects affecting reading comprehension abilities.....	42
2.11.1 Vocabulary.....	42
2.11.2 Phonological awareness .....	44
2.11.3 Metalinguistic knowledge.....	45
2.11.4 Attitude .....	46
2.11.5 Motivation.....	47
2.11.6 Interest .....	49
2.11.7 Attention .....	50
2.11.8 Memory.....	51
2.12 Chapter Summary .....	54
<b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>3.0 Introduction.....</b>	<b>55</b>

<b>3.1 Research paradigm</b> .....	55
<b>3.2 Research approach</b> .....	56
<b>3.3 Research design</b> .....	57
<b>3.4 Population</b> .....	57
<b>3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques</b> .....	57
<b>3.6. FINDINGS</b> .....	58
<b>3.6.1 Demographic information</b> .....	58
<b>3.7 Data collection methods</b> .....	62
<b>3.7.1. Interviews</b> .....	62
<b>3.7.1.1 Pilot testing</b> .....	63
<b>3.7.2 Observations</b> .....	64
<b>3.7.3 Document analysis</b> .....	64
<b>3.8 Data collection process</b> .....	64
<b>3.9 Data analysis process</b> .....	65
<b>3.9.1. Validity and reliability</b> .....	66
<b>3.10 Ethical issues</b> .....	67
<b>3.11 Summary</b> .....	68
<b>CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION</b> .....	69
<b>4.1 Introduction</b> .....	69
<b>4.2 Presentation of findings</b> .....	69
<b>4.3. Discussion of the findings</b> .....	79
<b>4.3.1. Interpretation of findings</b> .....	79
<b>4.3.2 Comparison with literature</b> .....	81
<b>4.3.3 Impact of acculturation on language acquisition</b> .....	89
<b>4.3.5. Implications for reading comprehension</b> .....	91
<b>4.4 Educational policy implications</b> .....	97

<b>4.5 Conclusion</b> .....	99
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	101
<b>5.1 Introduction</b> .....	101
<b>5.2 Summary</b> .....	101
<b>5.3 Conclusion</b> .....	103
<b>5.4 Limitations of the study</b> .....	103
<b>5.5 Recommendations</b> .....	104
<b>5.5.5 Recommendation for further studies</b> .....	105
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	107
<b>APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE</b> .....	116
<b>APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR</b> .....	118
<b>APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR: TEACHERS, TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR GRADE 4</b> .....	119
<b>APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE TEACHERS</b> .....	123
<b>APPENDIX E: LEARNERS PERFORMANCE IN GRADE 4</b> .....	129

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the background of the study and statement of the problem. It also points out the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study as well as the delimitations and limitations of the study. It concludes with definitions of the key terms that were used in the study.

### **1.1. Background of the study**

Research indicates that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic success (Bauer & Gort, 2018; Julius, 2017). In other words, learners who are good readers are more likely to do well in school and pass the examinations than learners who are weak readers (Rock, 2018). The development of learners' vocabulary through reading enhances their writing ability (Gove & Cvelich, 2019).

In many low-income countries, such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa, a significant percentage of children struggle with reading comprehension due to limited access to quality education and resources. For instance, 90% of 10-year-olds in low-income countries cannot read and understand a simple story (Mule, 2018). Countries like Turkey and Chile also face challenges, with about 50% of adults at or below basic literacy levels. In the U.S., 65% of fourth-graders read below or at the basic level. This issue is often linked to disparities in educational resources and support. Similarly, in England, 1 in 5 children cannot read proficiently by the age of 11 (Rock, 2018).

Namibia's formal education system comprises seven years of compulsory and free primary education, three years of junior secondary and two years of senior secondary

education. The revised and current curriculum indicates that the junior primary phase begins from Grade 0 to 3 while the Senior Primary phase begins from Grade 4 to 7 (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2019). Particular challenges arise when demands are made on learners' reading and writing ability in English Second language when they come to the Senior Primary Phase. There is evidence that reading ability in the majority of Namibian public schools is low, especially in the now Senior Primary; for example, national reports on English performance in Kavango West region showed that the region has the lowest average score in English reading comprehension in Namibia (Hausiku, 2017).

In many low-income countries, such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa, a significant percentage of children struggle with reading comprehension due to limited access to quality education and resources. For instance, 90% of 10-year-olds in low-income countries cannot read and understand a simple story (Mule, 2018). Countries like Turkey and Chile also face challenges, with about 50% of adults at or below basic literacy levels. In the U.S., 65% of fourth-graders read below or at the basic level. This issue is often linked to disparities in educational resources and support. Similarly, in England, 1 in 5 children cannot read proficiently by the age of 11 (Rock, 2018).

Namibia's formal education system comprises seven years of compulsory and free primary education, three years of junior secondary and two years of senior secondary education. The revised and current curriculum indicates that the junior primary phase begins from Grade 0 to 3 while the Senior Primary phase begins from Grade 4 to 7 (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2019). When learners reach the Senior Primary Phase and are expected to demonstrate proficiency in reading and writing in

English as a second language, certain difficulties occur. There is proof that most Namibian public schools teach students to read poorly, particularly in Senior Primary. For instance, national reports on English performance in the Kavango West region revealed that the region has the lowest average score in Namibia for English reading comprehension (Hausiku, 2017).

In Namibia, where English is the official language but not the first language for many learners, learners often face difficulties in reading comprehension due to the language barrier. This is a common issue in many ESL contexts (Hausiku, 2017). In order to track learner's' advancement in these areas, Namibia instituted standardized exams in English, Natural Science, and Mathematics for grades 5 and 7 across the country in 2009 (Namibia, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2019). The following ranking is based on the test results of the learners: A below basic level of knowledge and skills, a basic level of knowledge but limited skills, an above basic level of proficiency in knowledge and skills, or an exceptional level of knowledge and advanced skills are the four categories. The results of these examinations show that, in the evaluated subjects English being the least proficient in the two Kavango regions very few Namibian children less than 20% displayed proficient knowledge and skills (Above Basic).

It's also interesting to note that, across all disciplines evaluated in 2014, no learner showed exceptional knowledge and advanced skills, according to data from these examinations. These findings, along with the automatic promotion procedure put in place by the MoEAC, would indicate that students move on to the next grade without mastering the required competencies in English for that grade. This is further evidenced by the performance of Grade 7 in 2021 in the Kavango West region results whereby they had a pass rate of 26% in English as a Second Language Ministry of

Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the factors that hinder reading comprehension in English in Grade 4 in Namibia.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Language proficiency plays an important role in educational achievement. Numerous learners who entered Grade 4 in Kavango West schools encountered serious difficulties in reading comprehension (Hausiku, 2017). This can be evidenced through their performance during reading comprehension tasks and activities (Hausiku, 2017). Learners are struggling to read comprehensions or even to pronounce the words correctly. When learners face reading problems, the blame is often put on the Junior Primary teachers' unsatisfactory preparation of the learners in the lower grades (Mule, 2018). Learners are supposed to master the basic skills of reading comprehension at the lower grades but it has been observed that by the end of the lower primary phase, many learners including the learners under study have not met the required second language reading standards (Rock, 2018). From Grade 4 to 12, teachers experience incompetency in reading capabilities among learners (Mule, 2018). As a result, the situation impacted the learner's progress in other grades, because English reading proficiency is a prerequisite for understanding all other subjects (Rock, 2018). The researcher chose Grade 4 learners for this study because Grade 4 is the first grade to use English as a medium of instruction after the transitional Grade 3 in which Mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction.

### **1.3 Research questions**

1. What challenges do Grade 4 students at the chosen schools face in understanding English as a second language?
2. What are the possible factors that contribute to difficulties encountered in English as a Second Language reading comprehension by Grade 4 learners?
3. What strategies can be used to improve learners' reading comprehension in English as a Second Language in Grade 4?

### **1.4 Significance of the study**

This study holds paramount significance as it addresses a critical educational concern in the Kavango West Region of Namibia. By delving into the factors affecting reading comprehension among Grade 4 learners in English as a second language, the research contributes valuable insights to both academic and practical domains. The findings of this study are poised to inform educational policies, curriculum development, and instructional strategies, ultimately enhancing the quality of English language education in the region. Additionally, the identification of specific obstacles to reading comprehension can empower educators with targeted interventions to support learners, fostering a more conducive learning environment. This research is pivotal in attempting to advance the understanding of language acquisition challenges in this context and, consequently, has the potential to catalyse positive transformations in English language education for Grade 4 students in the selected primary schools of the Kavango West Region.

### **1.5. Limitations of the study**

The main limitation of this study is pertaining to generalisability. Several potential limitations may affect the scope and generalisability of this study. Firstly, the findings

may be constrained by the specificity of the selected primary schools in the Kavango West Region, limiting the applicability to other regions or educational contexts in Namibia. Additionally, the study's reliance on Grade 4 learners may not fully capture the developmental nuances in reading comprehension skills, as factors influencing reading comprehension can vary across different grade levels. The temporal aspect of the study may also be a limitation, as it captures a snapshot in time, potentially missing dynamic changes in language education practices. Lastly, the researcher's presence and interactions during data collection could introduce response bias, impacting the reliability of the gathered information. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the study's outcomes and applying them to broader educational contexts.

### **1.6 Definition of terms**

Reading-it is a receptive skill - through it we receive information. But the complex process of reading also requires the skill of speaking, so that we can pronounce the words that we read. In this sense, reading is also a productive skill in that we are both receiving information and transmitting it (even if only to ourselves) (Rock, 2018). In this study, reading is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them.

**Reading comprehension-** is the capacity to comprehend written material after it has been read and understood. It depends on two interrelated skills: language comprehension, or understanding the meaning of the words and phrases, and word reading, or being able to decode the symbols on the page (Mule, 2018). In this context, reading comprehension is the ability to understand and interpret written text

**English as a Second Language (ESL or TESL)-** is a phrase commonly used to describe how non-native speakers of English use or study the language in an English-speaking context. It is sometimes referred to as English for Speakers of Other Languages (Bauer & Gort, 2018). In this study it refers to the use of English by individuals whose native language is different, commonly among students learning to speak and write English.

### **1.7 Chapter summary**

In brief, this chapter gave an insight into the research problem and brief details on the background of the research. The statement of the problem was highlighted. The potential limitations of the study and ways of overcoming them were highlighted. Delimitations of the study were also emphasised. Ultimately, the chapter ended up by defining key terms used in the research. The next chapter will present and review literature that has been done previously about the research topic.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces an extensive body of scholarly works that forms the foundation for understanding the factors influencing reading comprehension among Grade 4 learners in English as a second language. This section explores key themes and empirical studies related to reading development, and challenges faced by learners in similar contexts globally. Beginning by establishing a theoretical framework for understanding language learning processes, the chapter further explores the role of socio-cultural factors, educational policies, and instructional methodologies in teaching reading comprehension. Drawing on international and regional literature provides insights into successful strategies employed in diverse contexts to enhance reading comprehension skills. By situating the study within the broader academic discourse, the literature review aims to establish a clear rationale for investigating the identified factors in the unique context of Grade 4 learners in selected primary schools in the Kavango West Region of Namibia.

### **2.2. Second language acquisition in the educational landscape**

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a dynamic process that plays a pivotal role in the linguistic development of Grade 4 learners, particularly in the context of English as a second language. This section delves into the theoretical underpinnings of SLA and its implications for understanding the complexities of language learning in primary education (Skehan, 2018).

According to Derchant (2019), second-language acquisition (SLA) is the process by which people learn a second language. It is also the scientific discipline devoted to studying that process. The field of second-language acquisition is regarded by some

but not everybody as a sub-discipline of applied linguistics but also receives research attention from a variety of other disciplines, such as psychology and education (Hann, 2018).

A central theme in SLA research is that of interlanguage: the idea that the language that learners use is not simply the result of differences between the languages that they already know and the language that they are learning, but a complete language system in its own right, with its own systematic rules (Rock, 2018). According to Wong (2018), this interlanguage gradually develops as learners are exposed to the targeted language. The order in which learners acquire features of their new language stays remarkably constant, even for learners with different native languages regardless of whether they have had language instruction.

However, languages that learners already know can have a significant influence on the process of learning a new one. This influence is known as language transfer. The primary factor driving SLA appears to be the language input that learners receive. Learners become more advanced the longer they are immersed in the language they are learning and the more time they spend voluntarily reading. The input hypothesis developed by linguist Stephen Krashen theorises that comprehensible input alone is necessary for second language acquisition. Krashen makes a distinction between language acquisition and language learning (the acquisition–learning distinction), claiming that acquisition is a subconscious process, whereas learning is a conscious one (Mule, 2014).

According to this hypothesis, the acquisition process in L2 (Language 2) is the same as L1 (Language 1) acquisition. Learning, on the other hand, refers to conscious learning and analysis of the language being learned (Mule, 2018). Campbell (2019),

argues that consciously learned language rules play a limited role in language use, serving as a monitor that could check second language output for form — assuming the learner has time, sufficient knowledge, and inclination (the monitor hypothesis). Subsequent work, by other researchers, on the interaction hypothesis and the comprehensible output hypothesis, has suggested that opportunities for output and interaction may also be necessary for learners to reach more advanced levels (Hann, 2018). While SLA in the educational landscape offers numerous benefits, it also faces significant challenges that need to be addressed. By investing in resources, teacher training, and innovative assessment methods, educational systems can better support students in becoming proficient in a second language.

### **2.3 The influence of learners' first language on second language acquisition**

The role of first language in second language acquisition is significant. The impact of L1 in L2 acquisition differs in various aspects, not only in different types of languages but also in different components of language such as phonology, morphology, and syntax. Whenever processing the information and output using L2, the information was firstly deposited by L1, and the way of deposition in L1 has a strong impact on the result coming out in L2. This process is called transfer. Whenever a person is learning a second language, the mode of thinking and acquiring L2 must be highly affected by rules and habits in L1 (Harmer, 2017). The habits used in L1 would be duplicated in L2 expressions.

Due to some differences in the way of processing between L1 and L2, the learner could make errors in L2 acquisition. This process is called interference, which is the result of old habits of the first language, and it must be unlearned before the learning of the new habits of the second language (Campbell, 2019). According to Harmer (2017),

learners of the second language tend to transfer the forms, meaning, and culture of their L1 to the foreign language and culture when attempting to speak the language. By learning L2 habits, L1 habits are also transferred, and then the errors occur.

First-language acquisition can influence second-language learning. The influence can be positive or negative. Positive transfer occurs when the first language facilitates the acquisition of the second language (Hann, 2018). Negative transfer occurs when the first language has negative impacts on the second language and interferes with the first language. If the first language and the second language are similar, the first language can act as a source for the learner to understand how the second language works (Hann, 2018).

According to Derchant (2019), the positive transfer of the influence of learners' first language (L1) on second language acquisition (SLA) refers to the situation where the knowledge and skills of L1 facilitate the learning and use of a second language (L2). For example, Hann (2018), highlighted that if L1 and L2 share similar or identical sounds, words, structures, or pragmatic rules, the learners can easily recognise and produce them in L2 without much difficulty. This is also called facilitation, as it makes the acquisition task straightforward or trivial.

Some examples of positive transfer are:

Phonetics and phonology: Learners who speak a language that has the same or similar sounds as the target language can pronounce them more accurately and naturally. For

example, Spanish speakers learning English can easily produce the /r/ sound, unlike Japanese speakers who tend to replace it with /l/ (Hann, 2018).

**Morph syntax:** Learners who have a strong foundation in grammar and syntax in their L1 can transfer their knowledge to L2, especially if the languages have similar or identical rules. For example, French speakers learning English can quickly grasp the concept of subject-verb agreement, as both languages require the verb to agree with the subject in number and person (Carver, 2019).

**Vocabulary:** Learners who encounter words that have the same or similar form and meaning in both L1 and L2 can immediately recognise and acquire them. These words are also called cognates, as they share a common origin. For example, English speakers learning French can easily learn words like “animal”, “important”, and “possible”, as they are spelt and pronounced almost the same in both languages (Carver, 2019).

**Pragmatics:** Learners who are familiar with the social and cultural norms of communication in their L1 can apply them to L2 if the languages have similar or compatible conventions. For example, German speakers learning English can use the same strategies for making requests, giving compliments, or expressing opinions, as both languages have similar levels of directness and politeness (Campbell, 2019).

Positive transfer can be a great advantage for learners, as it can speed up the learning process, increase confidence and motivation, and reduce errors and frustration. However, positive transfer is not always guaranteed, as it depends on various factors, such as the degree of similarity or difference between L1 and L2, the level of

proficiency and awareness of L1, the exposure and input of L2, and the individual differences and preferences of learners. Therefore, learners should not rely solely on their L1 but also pay attention to the unique and distinctive features of L2, and seek feedback and guidance from teachers and native speakers (Campbell, 2019).

Negative transfer is a phenomenon that occurs when learners of a second language (L2) use their knowledge of their first language (L1) in ways that are inappropriate or incorrect in the L2. This can lead to errors in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, or pragmatics. For example, a Spanish speaker learning English might say “I have 20 years” instead of “I am 20 years old” because in Spanish, the verb “tener” (to have) is used to express age. This is an example of negative transfer of syntax, or word order (Campbell, 2019).

According to Derchant (2019), negative transfer can happen for various reasons, such as:

- The learner is not aware of the differences between the L1 and the L2 and assumes that they are similar or identical.
- The learner has not learned enough of the L2 rules or patterns and relies on the L1 as a default strategy.
- The learner is influenced by the L1 habits or preferences and finds it difficult to switch to the L2 norms or conventions.

Negative transfer can be contrasted with positive transfer, which is when the L1 facilitates or accelerates the L2 learning. Positive transfer occurs when the L1 and the L2 share some similarities or commonalities, such as sounds, words, structures, or

functions. For example, a French speaker learning English might easily recognise and acquire words that are cognates, or have the same origin, such as “animal”, “important”, or “possible”. This is an example of a positive transfer of vocabulary (Harris, 2018).

Negative and positive transfers are both aspects of language transfer, which is the general influence of the L1 on the L2. Language transfer is an important issue in second language acquisition, as it can affect the learner’s progress, performance, and proficiency in the L2. Understanding the role of the L1 in the L2 can help learners avoid or overcome negative transfer, and make use of positive transfer, to improve their L2 learning outcomes (Harris, 2018).

The quality and quantity of exposure to English, both inside and outside the classroom, contribute to the development of language proficiency among Grade 4 learners in several ways.

First, exposure to English inside the classroom can help learners acquire the basic skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking in a structured and systematic way. Teachers can provide guidance, feedback, and correction to learners as they practice the language in various activities and tasks. Learners can also interact with their peers and learn from each other in a collaborative and supportive environment. Classroom exposure to English can also help learners develop their vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation through explicit instruction and implicit input (Wong, 2018).

Second, exposure to English outside the classroom can help learners enhance their language proficiency by exposing them to authentic and diverse sources of the

language. Learners can access English through various media, such as films, songs, books, magazines, newspapers, and the Internet. These sources can provide learners with rich and varied input that can expand their knowledge and awareness of the language and its culture. Learners can also use English as a medium of communication with native speakers or other learners of the language, either face-to-face or online. This can provide learners with opportunities to practice and use the language in real and meaningful situations, and to receive feedback and correction from their interlocutors (Harris, 2018).

Therefore, both the quality and quantity of exposure to English are important for the development of language proficiency among Grade 4 learners. According to a study by Derchant (2019), language exposure has a positive correlation to language proficiency in the areas of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Language exposure is necessary for second language learning and language proficiency. High exposure to the target language provides more opportunities for learners to practice and be proficient in the target language (Campbell, 2019).

Understanding the influence of L1 can help educators develop more effective teaching strategies. For instance, they can anticipate common errors and design activities that specifically address these issues. The cultural context of the L1 can also influence L2 learning. Teachers can use culturally relevant materials to make learning more relatable and engaging for students. While the influence of the L1 on L2 acquisition can present challenges, it also offers opportunities for leveraging existing knowledge and skills. Effective teaching strategies and an understanding of the underlying theories can help mitigate negative influences and enhance the learning experience.

#### **2.4 Teachers' role in promoting learners' second language acquisition.**

The teacher is the dominant figure in the classroom, and learners follow his or her advice. Teachers need to encourage learners to read on a wide scale this includes good children's books, comics, magazines, newspapers, and cartoons. This could lead to stimulating experiences and accelerated growth and increased reading competencies (Rock, 2018).

Knell (2018) explains that books that can be read for pleasure or general information must be present in classroom libraries to develop reading skills and make reading more enjoyable and exciting. Additionally, the supply of interesting reading materials must always be available to children to sustain their love for reading. Meanwhile, to support reading interests in the class, the value of reading aloud activities by learners from interesting literature must be undertaken regularly in the classroom. These activities would enable teachers to assess learners' progress and detect learners' individual needs in reading and would promote continued growth in reading skills (Boakye, 2019).

The role of the teacher represents a fundamental difference in the Language approach. Whilst the teacher may be an expert linguist with a deep understanding of how languages are learnt, and therefore the strategies to be used to support this, in the language classroom he or she will not be the expert in all or even any of the languages chosen by the students. Instead, the role of the teacher is as a designer and facilitator of learning (Du Plessis & Naude, 2018). Teachers create the conditions for students to manage their own learning processes and learn collaboratively with their peers in order to become more independent learners. Teachers also design projects that offer multi-faceted learning opportunities. They are expert advisors on learning to both

students and mentors and are responsible for setting up any assessment or student presentation opportunities (Rock, 2018).

The teacher's role in an autonomous learning classroom is to provide the learners with the skills and ability to practice what they have learned no matter if we talk about a language classroom or any other course. As Dam says: "Let me first of all mention the fact that learners do not necessarily learn what we believe ourselves to be teaching... What we can do is give our learners an awareness of how they think and how they learn – an awareness which hopefully would help them come to an understanding of themselves and thus increase their self-esteem" (Dam, 2018).

A big part of implementing autonomy in the classroom is to teach diverse learning strategies and assist the learners in finding the methods that best suit them. Many researchers and scholars who deal with learner autonomy have suggested a few ways or methods which teachers should use or implement during teaching (Rock, 2018). Some which are more common are logbooks, where teachers keep track of their students' progress on the activities, a few minutes' tack, use posters or other routines used in class, which have shown good results everywhere. All these tools should make learners more self-sufficient and independent in the learning process. Every system of education should seek clearly and make sure to use learner autonomy, being that a part of language learning or other, and the material which should be dealt with during the time of study (Du Plessis & Naude, 2018).

In an autonomous classroom, teachers do not play the role of imparters of information or sources of facts. Their role was more than that of a facilitator. The teacher's position was to manage the activities in the classroom and help learners plan their learning both for a long and short term. The teacher had to be able to establish a close collaboration

with the learners and make sure that all learners know what is expected of them at all times (Rock, 2018). Teachers have the role of counsellors. They need to inform learners and make them capable of choosing the best learning strategies. Learners have to be able to make informed choices. This means knowing the rationale behind the strategies and having time to experiment to find which suits best for each occasion. Teachers must, however, be careful not to guide the learners implicitly to the strategies they themselves prefer (Nunan, 2018).

A learner-autonomous classroom was a place where learners and teachers have constructive interaction with each other and learn from each other. The teacher is responsible for helping learners become aware of alternative strategies and learning styles (Camilleri, 2019). The teacher gives praise and feedback but this was also supplied by the other learners when group work and product were jointly assessed after projects were finished. Learners then get more personal feedback and guidance from the teacher through the logbooks which serve as a medium of communication as well as a tool of organisation and reflection (Mule, 2018). A teacher who intends to foster his learners' autonomy should not only introduce various learning strategies but also give his learners ample opportunity to try them out in different circumstances. It is necessary to build up an atmosphere in the classroom that invites such experiments and lets learners feel comfortable sharing their findings with their teacher and their classmates. Interaction in the classroom directly influences the learners' learning processes (Du Plessis & Naude, 2018).

With more and more attention being focused on improving students' communicative competence, the roles teachers have to play must be redefined (Derchant, 2019). The best teachers are usually the ones who impart an attitude or an orientation related to

the acquisition of mental abilities, or who are associated with the particular values that one finds personally motivating and inspirational (Rock, 2018).

Specifically speaking, teachers should take on the following roles in modern English classroom teaching. First, instead of being the dominating authority in the classroom, lecturers must become learning facilitators to facilitate the communicative process between all participants in the classroom and between these participants and the various activities and texts (Breen & Candlin, 2019), giving guidance and advice when necessary. Teachers should also act as interdependent participants within the learning-teaching group (Camilleri, 2019), which means that the teacher needs to perceive students as having important contributions to make, and then the teacher must continually seek potential and exploit and actively share the responsibility for learning and teaching with them. The teacher must realise that any unnecessary intervention from us may prevent them from becoming genuinely involved in the activities and thus hinder the development of their communicative skills. However, this does not necessarily mean that the teacher should be a passive observer. Instead, teachers should develop students' potential through external direction and help them develop their distinctive qualities (Rock, 2018).

Second, just as teachers want students to be life-long learners, teachers must exhibit a passion for learning, a desire and an aptitude to continue discovering new knowledge and exemplify by constantly refreshing educators' knowledge and skills to keep abreast with the latest developments in educators' area of specialisation (Rock, 2018).

Third, to keep pace with the times, teachers also need to be creative and innovative in integrating educators' teaching with thinking and learning processes. Teachers must give students more opportunities for expression and provide an environment where

creativity can flourish. Teachers must encourage students to question and express their thoughts freely so that they will have inquisitive minds (Breen & Candlin, 2019).

Teachers must realise that it was obligatory for lecturers to adopt different methods when dealing with different teaching materials and when faced with students with different levels of English proficiency (Camilleri, 2019). To achieve this purpose, teachers must enrich their knowledge of English and improve educators' English skills by various means such as listening to programs in English, watching English programs on TV and surfing the English versions of various news items on the Internet frequently. In a word, to improve students' oral proficiency, the teacher should try every possible means to make walking encyclopaedias so that the lecturer can teach any student anything with skill and ease (Breen & Candlin, 2019),

As was mentioned above, accuracy and fluency are so closely related that they are inseparable. Derchant (2019) proposes that because learners have a limited capacity for attention, there could be trade-off effects between accuracy and fluency. That is, when attention was paid to accuracy, fluency was likely to suffer and vice versa (Patanasorn, 2019). So attaching equal importance to both accuracy and fluency exercises was a must. Accuracy exercises encourage thoughtful use of language and the information was intended to help students understand how English works, while fluency exercises invite them to take the parts of different characters when role-playing and to continue a dialogue in their own way, that was, the fluency exercises encourage free expression (Camilleri, 2019).

Doing accuracy exercises does not mean error-free, but a high degree of accuracy is required, and as a result, students are encouraged to make as few errors as possible and to manipulate the language as spontaneously and flexibly as possible (Rock, 2018).

But when assigning accuracy and fluency exercises, the teacher had better keep in mind the following: For one thing, the teacher had better assign exercises that need the knowledge with which students are familiar, because it is found that the personal task which is based on information well known to learners allows them to be more fluent in their performance (Breen & Candlin, 2019). For another, the teacher had better give students more planning time.

With regards to planning, it has been suggested that providing learners with more planning time prior to conducting the task helps learners produce more fluent and complex language (Patanasorn, 2019). Generally, the more planning time they are given, the more familiar they are with the inherent structure of discourse and as a result, the more accurate and fluent they will be in their performance because familiarity with content and the opportunity to plan help lessen the load of information processing which allows learners more intentional resources to focus on formal aspects of language as well as help them to become more fluent in their performance (Camilleri, 2019).

Using Schumann's Acculturation Model (1986), the researcher aimed to explore how acculturation experiences intersect with SLA. The learners' social and cultural interactions within the English-speaking community contribute to the broader context of language acquisition, influencing their proficiency and attitudes towards English.

While teachers are pivotal in promoting second language acquisition, their impact can be maximized by addressing these challenges. Embracing innovative teaching methods, focusing on both fluency and accuracy, and providing personalized support can enhance the effectiveness of language instruction.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study draws upon Schumann's Acculturation Model (1986) to explore the intricate relationship between cultural and social factors and their impact on the reading comprehension abilities of Grade 4 learners in English as a second language within selected primary schools in the Kavango West Region. Schumann's model posits that the acculturation process significantly influences language acquisition (Camilleri, 2019).

The model identifies social and cultural variables, such as contact with the English-speaking community, exposure to the language, and the degree of cultural assimilation, as crucial factors shaping language development Rock (2018). Based on this model, the more a second language learner becomes part of the target language community, the better they will acquire the target language (Mule, 2014). According to Schumann's model, language is one aspect of culture, and the relationship between the language community of the learner and the second language community is important in language acquisition (Wong, 2018).

The basic premise of Schumann's model was the significance of the degree to which a learner acquires and applies the target language since this can control the degree to which he or she acquires the second language (Mule, 2014). The process of acculturation often leads to a second language acquisition. This may occur through a variety of mechanisms including both formal classroom education as well as through informal social networks, media and other mediums of culture (Wong, 2018). Some learners make rapid progress in learning a second language while others with the same initial ability and language instruction make little progress in the same amount of time.

Schumann hypothesised that this difference could be accounted for by characteristics of the social and psychological distance learners placed between themselves and the language they were learning (Wong, 2018).

The researcher used the acculturation theory to determine the degree to which learners acculturate when learning a second language. The model suggests that the extent of learner acculturation to the target-language group can lead to the degree to which he acquires the second language. The model has been used in various studies to investigate the relationship between acculturation and second language acquisition (Hausiku, 2017).

In the context of this study, the acculturation experiences of Grade 4 learners are examined through the lens of Schumann's model. Factors such as the learners' interactions with English-speaking peers and teachers, exposure to English in formal and informal settings, and the level of integration of English language and culture within the educational environment are considered (Mule, 2018).

Schumann's model suggests that a positive acculturation experience, characterised by meaningful interactions with the English language and culture, may positively impact reading comprehension. Conversely, challenges in acculturation, such as limited exposure or cultural barriers, may hinder the development of effective reading comprehension skills (Mule, 2014). By adopting Schumann's Acculturation Model as a theoretical framework, this study aims to illuminate the nuanced connections between cultural and social influences and the reading comprehension abilities of Grade 4 learners in English as a second language within the specific educational context of the Kavango West Region.

This theoretical framework is complemented by existing literature on reading development, and educational practices. The combined framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how cultural and social dynamics, as outlined by Schumann's Acculturation Model, intersect with other factors influencing reading comprehension in Grade 4 learners of English as a second language.

The next section defines reading in general and reading comprehension in particular.

## **2.6 Concept of reading comprehension**

According to Rockets (2017), reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency and motivation. Reading also means making meaning from print. In addition, reading is also about decoding, comprehension, narrative, familiarity with books and other printed material and a culture of wanting to and enjoying reading (House of Commons, 2018). This goes hand in hand with Derchant (2019) who states that reading involves the recording of the printed words in the brain by the visual and perceptual processes, converting the written symbols into language, and through cognitive and comprehension processes creating meaning by relating the symbols to the readers' prior knowledge.

Moreover, Harris (2018) states that reading could be defined as the understanding of the written text. This simply means that the end result of any act of engagement should be comprehension of a text. Harris (2018) emphasised four principles of effective readers, namely:

- Effective readers do a lot of predicting.
- Effective readers use certain strategies to help them with reading difficulties and blockages. These include sounding out letters in words and breaking words into parts.

- Effective readers draw heavily on their background knowledge.
- Effective readers are typically confident enough to read difficult text.

These principles are applicable in this study because they highlight that past experience with reading, knowledge of sounds and words, most importantly knowledge about the content being written in the text influences reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension is concerned with the ability to pay attention to written information, which can sometimes be a difficult process for readers (Carver, 2019). Students should follow elaboration that helps them take in information and understand the main ideas from the text. This will help their retention and understanding of the text. So, sooner or later, students will gradually read and analyse the text to solve the problem encountered. For example, readers are given a simple text to read at first than are gradually given a complex one to comprehend by themselves. Consequently, they can try out the strategies of perfect reading that solve their problems. Harmer (2017) says, “Any exposure to English is a good thing for language students. At the very least, some parts of the language stick in their minds as part of language acquisition” (p. 68).

Proficient reading comprehension, or the ability to understand and interpret text, is critical for success in school and life (Harmer, 2017). Students with poor reading comprehension are more likely to experience suicidal thoughts, drop out of school, and end up in the criminal justice system (Harmer, 2017). Thus, it is imperative that students receive explicit instruction for reading comprehension. However, as demonstrated by Carver (2019), skilful reading comprehension involves many skills such as decoding abilities, reading fluency, background knowledge, vocabulary,

inferencing skills, awareness of text structure, and getting the "gist" of the text. Thus, reading comprehension is quite complex, and explicit reading comprehension instruction helps students build the skills required to understand and interpret text (Carver, 2019).

Reading comprehension requires the coordination of multiple linguistic and cognitive processes including, but not limited to, word reading ability, working memory, inference generation, comprehension monitoring, vocabulary, and prior knowledge (Carver, 2019). Further, reading comprehension is considered a key competence in the modern information society, and there is a high demand for the comprehension of complex texts throughout learners' schooling (Derchant, 2019). This statement resonates with Rockets (2017), postulation that reading comprehension refers to the ability to interpret a text and make various inferences about it in a manner which can deliver different conclusions.

This notion is echoed by Harmer (2017) who argues that reading comprehension is about thinking that is, cogitating whilst reading. Therefore, reading comprehension involves engaging in the act of reading with a questioning mind, which will result in comprehension, evaluation and the decision to accept or reject what was read. Thus, the interaction between a text and the reader facilitates the reading process. For this reason, Derchant (2019) indicate that comprehension of text involves the ability to interpret the written word, conceptualise meaning from the text, understand the intention of the author, be aware of the theme of the text, and use language to create special effects. These abilities, in effect, refer to reading comprehension.

Accordingly, Derchant (2019) reasons that for effective reading to transpire, the teacher should support the learners to connect the text and the real world. These demands seem to make it difficult for learners to become critical readers without the teachers' guidance on how reading comprehension strategies should be applied during the reading process. It is for this reason that instruction on reading comprehension strategies has become a present-day necessity.

## **2.8 Teaching methods of reading**

In this section, the teaching methods used are explored. These are the phonics, whole language, look and say, the language experience and the shared reading methods.

### **2.8.1 Phonics method**

According to the phonics method, reading is a matter of learning letter-sound relationships, and reading and memorising words in isolation (Ekwall & Shanker, 2019). Phonics, as described by Adams (2019, p. 103), refers to “a system of teaching reading that builds on the alphabetic principle, a system of which a central component is the teaching of correspondences between letters or groups of letters and their pronunciations”. In this method, small units like letters and short words, along with spelling and punctuation rules, are taught in isolation, devoid of meaning. Behaviourist scholars argue that when children learn to pronounce words correctly, meaning will follow automatically (Weaver, 2019).

Kidd (2017) opines that the phonics approach tended to ignore the valuable information, language patterns and reading strategies children bring to the reading experience, as well as reading and writing simultaneously. When this method is used,

children struggle to learn how to use their acquired knowledge when approaching texts during reading because they are forced to focus on lists of phonics, words and rules they have memorised instead of applying strategies focused on the process behind reading. This might hamper the ability to read in some cases. Taking Kidd's view and what is taking place in schools at present where most learners cannot read, I tend to agree with her. The phonic method advocates the teaching of isolated skills such as letter names which is based on a belief that knowing all the letter names and sounds will help learners understand and read fluently but this is not really the case.

### **2.8.2 Whole language method**

The Whole language method is a socio-psycholinguistic method (Weaver, 2019). When reading and writing within this method, learners are viewed as constructing meaning for themselves within familiar contexts in which interaction between them and other role players takes place. There is also a central focus on reading and writing for meaning. In order to determine the meanings of words, various contexts are used. For example, the grammatical context, semantic context, pragmatic context and schematic context are used to read for meaning (Weaver, 2019). In this way, learners experience both reading and writing as being purposeful and valuable. It can also be called the language experience method which holistically handles language and literacy and builds on what the child already knows. Carter (2018.p. 23) describes the method as, "based on the ideas that children's experiences can be talked about, and recorded by the teacher and form part of the reading material".

Leu and Kinzer (2017, p. 234) explain that it "represents an effort to teach reading using children's language and experience as a base". This method is based on meaning.

The teacher creates an opportunity for learners to talk about something of interest and then writes the sentences produced by the learners on the chalkboard (Hausiku, 2017). These sentences form the reading text to be read by the learners. This method works well with thematic teaching because learners have prolonged exposure to one theme for a week or more. Therefore, they have background knowledge about the topic and can construct their own sentences easily (Mule, 2018). This promotes learning for understanding because learners read more authentic sentences drawn from their schemata. It should be noted that learners' critical thinking skills are developed when they construct sentences from their own experiential material (Derchant, 2019).

### **2.8.3 The look and say method**

The look-and-say method is used to teach reading. The basic feature of this method is explained by Campbell (2019, p. 276) as being based on the view that "language is indeed whole and it is best learnt as a whole with meaningful and relevant texts". This method can also be divided into two approaches; the look-and-say whole word and the look-and-say whole sentence approach. When teaching via the look-and-say word method, a teacher introduces words with the help of pictures or real objects. The words are then presented on flash cards. In this method, as explained by Hann (2018, p 341), "children are taught to respond to whole words rather than separate parts of words". The teacher shows a picture for the learners to identify (e.g. a chair). When they identify the picture as a chair, the teacher then flashes the word or writes it on the chalkboard, and tells the learners that the word is pronounced, 'chair' (Hausiku, 2017). Learners are encouraged to say the word as a whole after the teacher. They repeat this with all the words. Once learners become confident in reading the words, the pictures

are removed. The focus of this study is to find out if teachers used these effective approaches (Rock, 2018).

#### **2.8.4 The shared reading method**

Shared reading is an interactive approach to teaching reading that bridges “reading aloud and guided reading” (Siyave, 2017). In shared reading, the teacher reads together with a group of learners. Siyave (2017), developed this strategy and it is modelled on the way literate, middle-class parents read storybooks to their children at home. In school, a teacher reads to a group of learners rather than to a single child. According to Ferreiro and Teberosky (2018, as cited in Siyave, 2017), the shared reading model allows a group of learners to experience many of the benefits that are part of storybook reading. Smith (as cited in Siyave, 2017, p. 212) contends, “It is a non-threatening and enjoyable way to strengthen the language skills of struggling readers”. Yaden (2018 as cited in Siyave, 2017) explains that during shared reading, “learners are actively involved” throughout the reading process as the teacher may pause and use scaffolding or support learners by doing the following: asking learners for predictions as to what will happen next, discussing the title and author, discussing the pictures as he/she is reading, using her finger to point to the words as he/she reads and therefore show the direction of reading, discussing the meaning of words, and drawing punctuation marks to learners’ attention.

Bridge et al. (2018) explain that through repeated reading and prediction of the text, learners become familiar with word form and learn to recognise words and phrases. These activities develop language comprehension and word recognition; which learners need to coordinate to develop as skilled readers (Scarborough, 2018).

While it is evident that teacher training institutions prepare student teachers in all the approaches and the methods and techniques outlined in this chapter, the researcher has observed that once these student teachers graduate and are in the field they hardly follow them. In addition, in the case of teaching reading skills, particular attention is needed in preparing learners to acquire reading skills so that numerous reading difficulties are avoided. In Namibian schools, the shared reading method, whole language method and the phonics method are the ones used during the teaching and learning of reading comprehension (Hausiku, 2017).

### **2.9 Difficulties that reader encounter in reading comprehension tasks**

Theoretically, scholars like Oakhill and Elbro (2019) believe that reading comprehension is a complex process which requires the organisation of prior cognitive skills and abilities. Besides, when readers are not able to understand the whole text, they will encounter difficulties in decoding words in such text. Reading comprehension generally depends on comprehending the target language. This requires comprehending words, sentences, and contexts of the text. Yet, comprehension typically requires the previous knowledge of incorporating these words and sentences within the understanding of the context and the meaning of the text.

In the same vein, Treheane and Doctorow (2018) explain that other problems influence learners' reading comprehension skills. Such problems are learners' reading situations, helpful teaching on comprehension style, text type, and being aware of several reading comprehension strategies. Childs (2018) believes that focusing on wide reading materials and depending on background knowledge and comprehension are the main

two elements that are connected with thinking, which means thinking mechanism and authentic interest in reading comprehension are the best principles for learners' success and achievement. Due to the range of general knowledge and analytical skills, these lead to acquiring the ability to comprehend well.

Pang et al. (2019) think that reading is "understanding written texts" (p. 6). They believe that reading includes two interrelated processes: prior knowledge and comprehension. They defined prior knowledge as the process that helps learners to improve and expand their abilities of comprehension, while comprehension was the process of making the meaning of words or sentences in the text. Pang et al. (2019) also state that readers should have background knowledge, vocabulary, and other strategies to understand written texts.

Moreover, Biancarosa and Snow (2020) stress that students who encounter difficulties in reading comprehension, including those with learning disabilities (LD) who have been identified as having problems with English language skills and background knowledge, may be exposed to problems in reading words or sentences. They may fail to comprehend what they read, they may lose the reading fluency needed to facilitate understanding or they may be misusing or achieving strategies to aid them in comprehending the core of a text, and to understand main ideas.

Cain et al. (2020) believe that students struggle with reading comprehension, and fail in the automatic recognition of words, and sentences as a result of poor memory, and loss of strategies related to reading comprehension or ideas in the text. Such students may suffer from (limited reading comprehension strategies). Thus, these reasons lead to reading failure.

Kamil et al. (2018) believe that reading comprehension strategy instruction is considered one of the most important activities in classroom intervention. This aims to improve reading comprehension for readers and improve their level of analysing and thinking while reading any text. They thought that teaching depends on teacher modelling through an explanation of the strategies that are related to reading comprehension and adds a variety of practices in a classroom. Comprehension strategies include procedures that readers use to understand the texts, such as summarising, identifying the main ideas, paraphrasing, and analysing data.

Empirically, Wutthisingchai's (2019) study aims to verify English reading comprehension difficulties as recognised by Mathayom five students, reading the academic texts utilised in the English program at Thai Christian School in Bangkok, and to articulate if those Mathayom five students from various English programs had the same difficulties in reading comprehension. The students in the study were forty-eight Mathayom five students from various English programs at Thai Christian School in the academic year of 2010. A 20-item questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale was utilised to gather information. Descriptive statistics were utilised to resolve the information. There were mean, percentage, frequency, and standard deviations. According to the statistical information, the total outcome showed that most of the students were not sure whether they had difficulties in reading comprehension. Furthermore, on average, the students understood that motivation might be the first barrier affecting reading comprehension. Prior knowledge and a lack of reading strategies were perceived as the second and third barriers, respectively. However, Mathayom (5) students from the various English programs perceived difficulties in reading comprehension similarly. Chinese Language- Social Science students

demonstrated to be more aware of language difficulties and some culturally varied than the other sets (Wutthisingchai, 2019).

Regionally, Nezami's (2020) study aims to identify the main difficulties Saudi students encounter in comprehending English reading skills. The study aimed to find out reading problems inside classrooms faced by Arab learners in general. The researcher surveyed students in the preparatory year (boys) and community college (boys), and a survey of (36) questions in total. The study came with wide categories of difficulties such as incompetence in skimming and scanning the reading material, lacking vocabulary knowledge, poor reading skills and loss of focus (Nezami, 2020).

Alyousef (2019) investigates the areas of difficulties in six categories: Automatic recognition skills, vocabulary, and structural knowledge, formal discourse structure knowledge, synthesis and evaluation skills, strategies, metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring and content or world background knowledge. The researcher selected a random sample of sixth-grade students. The result of the study showed the participants struggled due to lacking adequate knowledge of vocabulary, no memory, and no fluency, and not getting and understanding the text and the point.

This literature is important to the reader as it shows that there are different factors such as poor command of vocabulary, the habit of cramming, and no interest in learning creativity in reading which hinders comprehension. The current study is relevant in giving learners more motivation to develop their reading capabilities and try to iron out their weaknesses. The literature applies to the study because it enables the learners and teachers to know the different problems that are encountered in comprehension tasks. The literature applies to the study because it enables the learners and teachers to know the different problems that are encountered in comprehension tasks. While

decoding is fundamental, an overemphasis on phonics and decoding skills in early education can sometimes neglect the development of comprehension skills. Balanced literacy instruction that integrates decoding with comprehension strategies is essential. Teaching comprehension strategies explicitly and providing opportunities for practice can help. However, these strategies should be taught in context rather than in isolation to ensure they are applied effectively. Addressing these difficulties requires a comprehensive approach that includes targeted instruction, practice, and support. By understanding and critiquing these challenges, educators can better support students in developing strong reading comprehension skills.

## **2.10 Factors affecting reading ability**

Oakhill and Elbro (2019) differentiate educational and non-educational factors that may affect the learners' performance in reading. Educational factors refer to those factors that come under the control of the educational system and influence learning; this may include the teaching method, instructional time, and school environment. Non-educational factors refer to factors that do not come under the control of the educational system and cannot be influenced by it, this includes home environment, understanding, motivation, and prior knowledge (Rock, 2018). Reading, as a complex process, is influenced by various factors such as home environment, socio-economic status (SES) and school environment. These factors can either facilitate or hinder the reading ability of learners (Scarborough, 2018).

### **2.10.1 Home environment**

Studies have repeatedly shown that investment by the family in the form of home learning has a positive bearing on the child's early linguistic and cognitive development, and also leads to school success in reading (Gove & Cvelich, 2019). It is

also premised that environments that are rich in reading materials such as books and other printed materials, and where parents engage their children in age-appropriate learning opportunities, contribute positively to a child's reading prowess and behavioural regulation (Kambuga, 2018).

Home-related factors have a very significant effect that affects the reading comprehension of learners. This is tested by the respondents whose parents' educational level had only attained elementary education. If parents have a good educational background, it would be easier for them to lead and help their children with their academic difficulties, especially in reading. Same as in the parents' occupation and several siblings, where nutritious food intake was possible if family income was suitable for the family's needs (Kambuga, 2018).

Learners who do not read reading materials at home or school affect their reading comprehension skills. Camos (YEAR, as cited in De Leon, 2019) states that if the child is exposed to reading materials it would have a great impact on the reading habits and interests of the learners.

### **2.10.2 Socio-economic status (SES)**

Several studies indicated that family income seems to influence literacy materials as well as behaviour and relationships in the home (Scarborough, 2018). The amount of money, time and energy parents spend on their children is considered an investment that has the potential to enhance children's cognitive and linguistic skills (Mule, 2019). The Kavango-West region where this study was conducted is one of the poorest regions of Namibia where poverty is rife and unemployment is estimated to be about

70% (Namibian Statistic Agency, 2019). Data collected for this study will thus be interesting to reveal how these factors contribute to reading comprehension.

One link between socioeconomic status and education, for example, is there is often a vocabulary gap between low- and high-income students. By second grade, low socioeconomic status (SES) students know about 4000 fewer words than their high SES peers. The reason is not that under-resourced students are not as capable of learning words but that they are less likely to access early education programs because their families cannot afford them (Gove & Cvelich, 2019).

According to Dr. Duke, a literacy achievement gap in education is ‘not any fault of family, not any fault of children—it’s the fault of a system that isn’t providing equitable access to quality preschool because one in five children in the United States lives on or below the poverty line, finding ways to supplement these deficiencies is a core responsibility for educators. The more access students of all SES levels have to classroom and at-home resources, the more vocabulary gaps close’ (Gove & Cvelich, 2019).

### **2.10.3 Inadequate reading instruction**

According to Lerner (2019), children who have a good start in reading read more and become better readers, in contrast to those who have a poor start in reading and so do not engage in wide reading but fall further behind. Similarly, Lyon (2018) notes that learning to read begins long before children enter formal schooling and that those who have stimulating literacy experiences from birth have an edge in vocabulary development, understanding the goal of reading, and developing an awareness of print and literacy concepts. Lyon (2018.172) concludes that “the children who are most at risk for reading failure enter kindergarten and the elementary grades without these

early experiences p.124”. In agreement with Lyon, Lerner (2019) argues that children come to school without literacy experiences (reading, writing and numeracy skills), and some struggle because they have received poor or inadequate reading instruction. Derchant (2019) point out that the socio-economic and the domestic environment of a child have an impact on learning to read. Derchant (2019) stressed that children raised in poverty, those with limited proficiency in English, those from homes in which the parents’ reading levels and practices are low, and those with speech, language and hearing difficulties, are at increased risk of reading failure because often they are not exposed to literacy practice.

Learner-related factors such as prior knowledge, understanding, and motivation if low hindered the reading comprehension skills of the students. Furthermore, prior knowledge plays a vital role in learners’ comprehension by the schema theory (Nunan, 2018).

#### **2.10.4 The school environment**

There seems to be a close relationship between the school environment and reading achievement. In light of this, findings by Costa and Araujo (2019) indicate that the higher the SES composition of a school, the higher the learners’ reading achievement. Rich schools’ cultural capital provides their learners with varied reading resources and as a result, promotes interest in reading (Rock, 2018. 98). This means that reading and writing develop well in environments that provide resources and opportunities for children to have access to these literacy resources.

Nowadays, textbooks for students include not only texts for general understanding but also texts which contain, for example, charts, graphs, tables, analyses and balance sheets. Different types of texts require different kinds of strategies. Selecting the

purpose of reading makes comprehension easier and more effective. These purposes might include reading to search for simple information, reading to skim, reading to learn from texts, reading to integrate, reading to write, reading to critique texts, and reading for general comprehension (Nunan, 2018).

Moreover, some researchers have found that teachers teaching in disadvantaged or low SES schools seem to lower their expectations for their learners' achievements. Pretorius and Machet (2020, p. 241), for example, indicate that "there is a tendency in disadvantaged schools for underachievement to be normalized". Rock (2018) argues that in communities where learners are believed to be of 'an inferior status', teachers seem to feel authorised to pursue educational purposes with little attention to learners' interests or supposed needs.

#### **2.10.5 Lack of self-efficacy**

There are various challenges faced by teachers in implementing reading strategies. One of the major hindrances is a lack of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's judgments and perceptions about whether they are capable of doing well and accomplishing a task (Bandura, 1997). Reading self-efficacy refers to individuals' judgment or self-evaluation about their ability to do well in reading activities such as reading a book, or reading a passage (Schunk & Pajares, 2018). Reading self-efficacy has been found to correlate positively with different measures of reading such as reading comprehension, breadth of reading and amount of reading outside of school (Du Plessis & Naude, 2018).

Lack of self-efficacy can hinder second language acquisition in various ways. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to perform a specific task or achieve a certain goal. It can affect learners' motivation, effort, persistence, and achievement in learning

a second or foreign language (Du Plessis & Naude, 2018). Some of the possible effects of low self-efficacy are:

Learners with low self-efficacy may avoid challenging tasks or situations that require language use, such as speaking or writing because they fear failure or negative feedback. This can limit their exposure and practice of the target language, and reduce their opportunities for learning and improvement (Schunk & Pajares, 2018).

Learners with low self-efficacy may have low expectations and goals for themselves, and may not invest much time and energy in language learning. They may also give up easily when they encounter difficulties or obstacles and attribute their failures to a lack of ability rather than a lack of effort or strategy (Scarborough, 2018).

Learners with low self-efficacy may experience more anxiety, stress, and negative emotions when learning or using the language, which can interfere with their cognitive processes and performance. They may also have low self-esteem and self-confidence, and feel less satisfied and fulfilled with their language learning outcomes (Schunk & Pajares, 2018).

#### **2.10.6 Heavy workloads**

Sometimes educators felt frustrated in implementing reading strategies because of heavy workloads. As they first had to teach the language and vocabulary for specific content, they found it impossible to complete the syllabus for the year. Also having learners in the class with better English abilities, teachers reported having to teach on diverse language and academic levels (Du Plessis & Naude, 2018).

#### **2.10.7 Parents' limited involvement**

Parents' limited involvement with their children's school work further was another challenge teacher are facing in implementing reading strategies in Kavango East

Region. Socio-emotional problems associated with learning in a language that was not their first language meant learners lost their home language and culture, for example, teachers felt that Rukwangali first language learners lost their first language vocabulary by replacing some words with English equivalents (Hausiku, 2017).

#### **2.10.8 Discipline and behaviour problems**

Discipline and behaviour problems amongst learners due to large class sizes are other challenges teachers are facing in implementing reading strategies. Lack of support by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture is another challenge educators are facing in implementing reading strategies. Teachers need a greater availability of support teams (MoEAC, 2019) for learners who need them.

#### **2.10.9 Cultural factors**

Another cultural factor that can affect a student's reading comprehension is whether they are learning a second language. English language-learning students, for example, may have trouble learning to read in English if they have not achieved oral fluency yet. Once a student has reached bilingualism, however, they are actually at an advantage for learning to read (Du Plessis & Naude, 2018). By nurturing pre-reading skills in a bilingual classroom, students' academic gains can reach or even exceed their monolingual peers. Cultural contexts can be positive, negative, or neutral. Whether a student reads left to right or right to left, for example, is neither advantageous nor damaging as long as the direction fits the cultural norm. Educators should, however, be aware of which factors are positive or negative so they can assist students and their families as needed (Scarborough, 2018).

## **2.11 Psychological and cognitive aspects affecting reading comprehension abilities**

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand and interpret written texts. It is a complex skill that involves many psychological and cognitive factors, such as vocabulary, phonological awareness, morphological awareness, metalinguistic knowledge, attitude, motivation, interest, attention, and memory. These factors can affect how well a reader can comprehend a text, and they can vary across languages, cultures, and individuals.

### **2.11.1 Vocabulary**

Reading is a highly complex form of behaviour that requires the coordination of many cognitive processes. Vocabulary is one of the most important factors in reading comprehension, as it determines the extent to which a reader can access the meaning of a text. Further, vocabulary is a psychological aspect that affects reading comprehension abilities in many ways. Vocabulary refers to the words that a person knows and can use in communication. Reading comprehension is the ability to understand and interpret written texts (Nunan, 2018). The following are some of the ways that vocabulary influences reading comprehension:

Vocabulary helps readers to access the meaning of texts. Words are the basic units of meaning in any language, and readers need to know the meanings of words in order to understand the messages that texts convey. If readers encounter unfamiliar words, they may not be able to grasp the main idea or the details of the text, or they may misinterpret the author's intention or tone. Therefore, having a large and varied vocabulary is essential for reading comprehension (Nunan, 2018).

Vocabulary helps readers to make inferences and predictions. Inferences are logical conclusions that readers draw from the text and their prior knowledge. Predictions are guesses about what will happen next in the text based on the clues and the context. Both inferences and predictions require readers to use their vocabulary knowledge to connect the information in the text with their existing knowledge and experience. For example, if readers know the meaning of the word “furious”, they can infer that the Bandersnatch is a fierce and angry creature, and predict that it will pose a threat to the hero of the story (Nunan, 2018).

Vocabulary helps readers to evaluate and critique texts. Evaluation is the process of judging the quality, accuracy, and relevance of texts. Critique is the process of expressing opinions, perspectives, and arguments about texts (Du Plessis & Naude, 2018). Both evaluation and critique require readers to use their vocabulary knowledge to analyse, compare, and contrast texts with other sources of information and knowledge (Rock, 2018). For example, if readers know the meaning of the word “brillig”, they can evaluate whether the author’s use of nonsense words is effective in creating a whimsical and fantastical mood, and critique whether the author’s choice of words is appropriate for the intended audience and purpose (Nunan, 2018).

In summary, vocabulary is a psychological aspect that affects reading comprehension abilities by helping readers to access the meaning of texts, to make inferences and predictions, and to evaluate and critique texts. Vocabulary plays a fundamental role in the reading process and is critical to reading comprehension. Therefore, it is important for readers to expand their vocabulary knowledge through various sources and strategies, such as reading widely and deeply, using context clues and dictionaries, and engaging in explicit vocabulary instruction.

### **2.11.2 Phonological awareness**

Phonological awareness is the ability to manipulate the sounds of a language, and it is essential for decoding and encoding words. Morphological awareness is the awareness of the smallest units of meaning in a language, such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots. It helps readers to infer the meaning and structure of unfamiliar words. Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language, such as rhyming, syllables, and phonemes (Patanasorn, 2019). Phonemes are the smallest units of sound that makeup words, such as /b/, /a/, and /t/ in the word “bat”. Phonological awareness is a psychological aspect that affects reading comprehension abilities because it helps children understand the alphabetic principle, which is the idea that letters represent the sounds of spoken language. When children have good phonological awareness, they can use their knowledge of sounds and letters to decode and spell words, as well as to comprehend what they read. Phonological awareness also helps children develop vocabulary, fluency, and oral language skills, which are all important for reading comprehension (Patanasorn, 2019).

Phonological awareness is a critical early literacy skill that can be developed through carefully planned instruction, and this development has a significant influence on children’s reading and spelling achievement. However, some children may have difficulty with phonological awareness, which can hinder their early reading development and lead to poor reading and spelling outcomes. Therefore, it is important to assess children’s phonological awareness skills and provide appropriate instruction and intervention to support their reading and spelling development (Patanasorn, 2019).

### **2.11.3 Metalinguistic knowledge**

Metalinguistic knowledge is the ability to reflect on and analyse language as an object of study. It involves skills such as grammar, syntax, and pragmatics, and it helps readers to understand the context and purpose of a text (Du Plessis & Naude, 2018).

Metalinguistic knowledge is the ability to reflect on and manipulate the structure and meaning of language. It is a psychological aspect that affects reading comprehension abilities because it helps readers understand the context, infer the meaning of unfamiliar words, and resolve ambiguities in the text (Breen & Candlin, 2019). For example, if a reader encounters a word that has more than one meaning, such as “bat”, they can use their metalinguistic knowledge to determine whether it refers to an animal or a tool based on the surrounding words and sentences. Similarly, if a reader encounters a sentence that can have more than one interpretation, such as “She saw the man with the binoculars”, they can use their metalinguistic knowledge to figure out who had the binoculars and what was the purpose of seeing the man (Breen & Candlin, 2019).

Metalinguistic knowledge can be improved by teaching students to recognise and manipulate the different aspects of language, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Some studies have shown that teaching metalinguistic awareness and reading comprehension with riddles can be an effective way to enhance students’ metalinguistic skills and reading performance (Breen & Candlin, 2019). Riddles are a form of wordplay that involves multiple meanings, puns, homophones, and other linguistic devices that challenge the reader to think flexibly and creatively about language. By solving riddles, students can learn to appreciate the humour and complexity of language, as well as develop their critical thinking and problem-solving

skills. Riddles can also motivate students to read more and enjoy reading, which can further improve their reading comprehension abilities (Breen & Candlin, 2019).

#### **2.11.4 Attitude**

Attitude is the evaluation of one's own reading ability and the value of reading as an activity (Mule, 2018). It influences the reader's motivation, interest, and engagement in reading. Attitude is a psychological aspect that can affect reading comprehension abilities in various ways. Attitude refers to the feelings, beliefs, and opinions that a person has towards a certain topic or activity. Attitude can influence how much interest, motivation, and effort a person puts into reading, as well as how they interpret and evaluate what they read (Rock, 2018).

According to Rock (2018), there is a positive relationship between reading attitude and reading comprehension. Students who had higher levels of metacognitive reading comprehension self-awareness, reading comprehension, and reading attitude also had higher scores on study habits and attitudes. This suggests that students who have a positive attitude towards reading are more likely to use effective strategies to understand and remember what they read, and to have a positive orientation towards learning in general (Rock, 2018).

As highlighted by Rock (2018), reading attitude is not a fixed trait that a person has. It can change depending on various factors, such as the type, difficulty, and relevance of the text, the purpose and context of reading, the feedback and support from others, and the personal goals and expectations of the reader. Therefore, reading attitude can also be influenced by external interventions, such as providing interesting and appropriate texts, giving clear and meaningful tasks, offering guidance and encouragement, and fostering a positive and collaborative reading environment (Du Plessis & Naude,

2018). These interventions can help improve the reading attitude of students who may have low interest, confidence, or enjoyment in reading, and thus enhance their reading comprehension abilities (Mule, 2018).

In summary, attitude is a psychological aspect that can affect reading comprehension abilities in both positive and negative ways. Attitude can influence how a person approaches, engages, and responds to reading, and how they use their cognitive and metacognitive skills to comprehend what they read. Attitude can also be changed by various factors, both internal and external, and can be improved by using suitable interventions. Therefore, reading attitude is an important factor to consider when teaching and learning reading comprehension.

#### **2.11.5 Motivation**

According to Du Plessis and Naude (2018), motivation is the drive to read for a specific goal or reward. It affects the reader's persistence, effort, and strategy use in reading. Motivation is a psychological aspect that affects reading comprehension abilities in various ways. Motivation can be defined as the internalised reasons for reading, which activate cognitive processes that enable the reader to perform such acts as acquiring knowledge, enjoying aesthetic experiences, performing tasks, and participating in social contexts (Hausiku, 2017) Motivation can be influenced by intrinsic factors, such as curiosity, aesthetic involvement, and challenge, or by extrinsic factors, such as recognition, grades, and social goals (Mule, 2018).

Some of the effects of motivation on reading comprehension are:

Scarborough (2018) highlighted that motivation can increase the amount and frequency of reading, which can improve reading fluency, vocabulary, and background knowledge. Reading fluency is the ability to read accurately, quickly, and with

expression, which facilitates comprehension. Vocabulary is the knowledge of word meanings, which is essential for understanding texts. Background knowledge is the information that readers have about a topic, which helps them make connections and inferences while reading (Du Plessis & Naude, 2018).

Schunk and Pajares (2018) also highlighted that motivation can enhance the use of comprehension strategies, such as summarising, questioning, predicting, and monitoring. Comprehension strategies are mental actions that readers take to construct meaning from texts. Summarising is the ability to identify and restate the main ideas and important details of a text. Questioning is the ability to generate and answer questions about a text. Predicting is the ability to anticipate what will happen next in a text. Monitoring is the ability to check and regulate one's own understanding while reading (Du Plessis & Naude, 2018).

Nunan (2018) stated that motivation can foster the development of reading efficacy, which is the belief that one can be successful at reading. Reading efficacy is related to academic achievement and self-regulation. Academic achievement is the level of performance that students attain in school. Gove and Cvelich (2019) further stated that self-regulation is the ability to control one's own behaviour, emotions, and cognition. Students who have high reading efficacy is more likely to set goals, plan, and evaluate their reading, as well as seek help when needed.

In summary, motivation is a psychological aspect that affects reading comprehension abilities by influencing the amount and quality of reading, the use of comprehension strategies, and the development of reading efficacy. Motivation can be enhanced by providing students with interesting and relevant texts, meaningful choices, feedback, rewards, and opportunities for social interaction.

### **2.11.6 Interest**

According to Gove and Cvelich (2019), interest is the degree of curiosity and enjoyment that a reader has for a particular topic or genre. It affects the reader's attention, concentration, and recall in reading. Interest is a psychological factor that can affect reading comprehension abilities in various ways. According to Derchant (2019), interest is a complex feeling or attitude that is derived from the characteristics of the reader, the factors inherent in the text, and the interaction of the reader and the text. Interest can influence the motivation, attention, engagement, and persistence of the reader, as well as the depth and quality of the processing and learning that occur during and after reading (Rock, 2018).

Nunan (2018) stated that interest can enhance reading comprehension by increasing the reader's prior knowledge, activating relevant schemas, facilitating the integration of new information with existing knowledge, and improving the recall and retention of the text content. Mule (2018), highlighted that readers who are interested in the topic of a text perform better on a recall test than those who are not interested, regardless of their reading ability.

According to Schunk and Pajares (2018), interest is not always a positive factor for reading comprehension. Interest can also interfere with reading comprehension by distracting the reader from the main idea, reducing attention to detail, inducing a biased or selective interpretation of the text, and impairing the critical evaluation of the text's quality and credibility. Readers who were interested in a text were more likely to accept inaccurate or misleading information as true, and less likely to notice inconsistencies or contradictions in the text (Mule, 2018).

Rock (2018), stated that interest is a complex and dynamic factor that can have both positive and negative effects on reading comprehension, depending on the type, level, and source of interest, as well as the characteristics of the text and the reader. Schunk and Pajares (2018) said that reading comprehension is not only influenced by interest, but also by other factors, such as reading skills, strategies, goals, and contexts. To improve reading comprehension, it is important to consider the role of interest, as well as other factors, and to use appropriate methods and materials to foster and sustain interest in reading (Nunan, 2018).

#### **2.11.7 Attention**

Schunk and Pajares (2018) stated that attention is the ability to focus on the relevant information in a text and ignore the irrelevant distractions. It affects the reader's speed, accuracy, and comprehension in reading. Attention is a psychological aspect that affects reading comprehension abilities in various ways. In support, Kambuga (2018) stated that reading comprehension is the process of understanding and interpreting a text, which requires attention to the meaning of words, sentences, and paragraphs. Attention also helps readers to focus on the main idea, connect different parts of the text, and integrate prior knowledge with new information (Hausiku, 2017). Some of the ways that attention influences reading comprehension are:

Yaden (2018), stipulated that attention enables readers to notice and process every word in a text, which is essential for understanding the nuances and subtleties of the language. For example, a single word can change the meaning of a sentence or a passage, so readers need to pay attention to the details and the context of the text (Rock, 2018).

Weaver (2019), stated that attention allows readers to sustain their concentration on a text for a long time, which is necessary for reading fluently and comprehensively. Waddle (2017) stipulated that readers who have difficulty maintaining their attention may lose track of the text, skip or repeat words, or forget what they have read. This can affect their reading speed, prosody, word recognition, and comprehension.

Attention helps readers to select and filter relevant information from a text, which is important for reading selectively and critically. Readers who have good attention skills can ignore distractions and irrelevant details, and focus on the main points and arguments of the text. This can enhance their reading efficiency and effectiveness (Kambuga, 2018).

Siyave (2017) stated that attention supports readers to divide and switch their attention between different sources of information, which is useful for reading multimodal and interactively. In agreement, Rockets (2017) stated that readers who have flexible attention skills can read texts that contain different types of media, such as images, audio, video, or hyperlinks, and integrate them with the written text. This can enrich their reading experience and understanding.

Therefore, attention is a key factor that affects reading comprehension abilities, and it can be improved by various strategies, such as setting a purpose for reading, previewing the text, using graphic organisers, summarising the text, asking and answering questions, and monitoring one's own comprehension.

#### **2.11.8 Memory**

Memory is the ability to store and retrieve information from short-term and long-term memory. It affects the reader's integration, inference, and evaluation of the information in a text (Siyave, 2017). Reading comprehension is the ability to

understand and interpret the meaning of a text. Memory is a psychological aspect that affects reading comprehension abilities in various ways. According to Rock (2018), memory can be divided into two types: short-term memory and long-term memory. Short-term memory, also known as working memory, is the process of temporarily storing and manipulating information. Long-term memory, also known as semantic memory, is the process of storing and retrieving general knowledge and facts (Gove & Cvelich, 2019).

Derchant (2019) stated that short-term memory plays a major role in reading comprehension because it allows readers to perform all the tasks required for reading. These tasks include recognising letters and words, remembering the sounds they represent, blending them to form words, and understanding how the words in a sentence are put together (Gove & Cvelich, 2019). Short-term memory also helps readers to integrate the information from the text with their prior knowledge and create a coherent mental representation of what the text is about. Research has found that short-term memory is critical for reading comprehension. Short-term memory capacity increases with age and is dependent on the development of the front part of the brain (frontal lobes) (Hausiku, 2017).

Long-term memory also plays a key role in reading comprehension because it provides readers with the semantic knowledge they need to understand the meaning of words and sentences.

Patanarson (2019), stated that semantic knowledge is the knowledge of concepts, categories, and relationships among them. For example, semantic knowledge helps readers to know that a dog is an animal, that it can bark, and that it is related to other animals such as cats and wolves (Gove & Cvelich, 2019). Semantic knowledge can be

organised in two ways: taxonomically or thematically. Taxonomic knowledge is the knowledge of how concepts belong to the same category or hierarchy. For example, dogs, cats, and wolves are all mammals (Mule, 2018). Thematic knowledge is the knowledge of how concepts are associated with events or situations. For example, dog, leash, and park are all related to the situation of walking a dog. Younger adults use flexibly either taxonomic or thematic knowledge, whereas older adults mainly use thematic knowledge (better preserved from age-related decline) (Hausiku, 2017).

Mule (2018) said that semantic knowledge affects reading comprehension differently depending on the genre of the text. A genre is a type of text that has specific characteristics and purposes. For example, a narrative text is a text that tells a story, whereas an expository text is a text that explains or informs about a topic (Nezami, 2020). Different genres of text require different cognitive processes and strategies for comprehension. For example, narrative texts rely more on thematic knowledge, whereas expository texts rely more on taxonomic knowledge. Therefore, semantic knowledge can facilitate or hinder reading comprehension depending on the genre of the text and the type of semantic knowledge available to the reader (Nunan, 2018).

In summary, memory is a psychological aspect that affects reading comprehension abilities in various ways. Short-term memory helps readers to perform the basic tasks of reading and to integrate the information from the text with their prior knowledge. Long-term memory helps readers to understand the meaning of words and sentences based on their semantic knowledge (Siyave, 2017). Semantic knowledge can be organised in two ways: taxonomically or thematically. Different genres of text require different types of semantic knowledge for comprehension. Therefore, memory is an

important factor that influences how well a reader can understand and interpret a text (Hausiku, 2017).

These are some of the psychological and cognitive factors that affect reading comprehension abilities. However, there are also other factors, such as the characteristics of the text, the background knowledge of the reader, and the reading environment, that can influence the reading process. Reading comprehension is a dynamic and interactive skill that can be improved with practice and instruction.

## **2.12 Chapter Summary**

This study is intended to investigate factors that hinder reading comprehension in English Second Language of Grade 4 learners. However, one can note that there was no research yet that has directly observed the factors that hinder reading comprehension in English Second Language among Grade 4 learners in Kavango west region. Consequently, the study in progress was expected to supplement the literature review on the factors that hinder reading comprehension in English Second Language. The subsequent chapter looks at the research methodology that would be used to gather data to satisfy the objectives of this research.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter dealt with the literature review. This chapter presents the methodology that will be employed in conducting the research. The research design, population, sample size, sampling procedure, data collection procedures, and instruments were covered in this chapter. The study aimed to determine the possible difficulties that Grade 4 learners encounter in English second language reading comprehension, to investigate the possible factors that contribute to difficulties encountered in English second language reading comprehension by the Grade 4 learners and to propose strategies that can be used to improve learners' reading comprehension in English as a second language in Grade 4. The research methodology will be guided by the acculturation model that emphasises identification with a community as the primary requirement of second language learning, to help with interpreting some of the factors that affect learners' reading comprehension in English.

### **3.1 Research paradigm**

The research paradigm addresses the philosophical dimensions of social sciences. According to Jonker and Pennik (2018), a research paradigm is a set of fundamental assumptions and beliefs as to how the world is perceived which then serves as a thinking framework that guides the behaviour of researchers. Similarly, Du Plooy et al. (2016) define a paradigm as a cluster of beliefs and dictates for which scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how the research should be done and how results should be interpreted. This means that a paradigm was an approach for conducting research, used as a guideline for developing research

methodology and taking the research venture in a manner that was most valid and appropriate.

This study adopted an interpretive paradigm because there was an acknowledgement that facts and values cannot be separated and that understanding is inevitably prejudiced (Wahyuni, 2018). The researcher used this paradigm because the responses are valid and close to the truth. With the individual mattering, they give a good reflection of how people are truly feeling often providing an accurate picture and measuring what the researcher set out to measure. Through the use of the interpretive paradigm, the researcher would recognise that all participants involved bring their own unique interpretations of the world or construction of the situation to the research and the researcher needs to be open to the attitudes and values of the participants or, more actively, suspend prior cultural assumptions (Wahyuni, 2018). The interpretive paradigm offers rich descriptive reports of individuals' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs, views and feelings, meanings given to events and things as well as behaviour (Wahyuni, 2018).

### **3.2 Research approach**

According to Maxwell (2018), qualitative research is a systematic, subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning and its main goal is to gain insight and explore the depth, richness and complexity inherent in the phenomenon. This study adopted a qualitative research approach. The researcher chose qualitative research because it is important in determining the particular frequency of traits or characteristics. It allows the researcher to create parameters by which larger data sets can be observed (Newbay, 2018). This study qualified as qualitative research because

it relies on personal accounts or documents that illustrate in detail how people think or respond within society.

### **3.3 Research design**

According to Maree (2016), a research design is a plan or strategy that moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of participants, the data-gathering methods to be used and the data- analysis to be done. This study adopted a qualitative research approach using an exploratory research design. Exploratory research is a type of research design that is used to investigate a research question when the researcher has limited knowledge or understanding of the topic or phenomenon under study (Newbay, 2018). The primary objective of exploratory research is to gain insights and gather preliminary information that can help the researcher better define the research problem (Newbay, 2018).

### **3.4 Population**

According to Du Plooy et al (2016), a population is a total group of people or entities (social artefacts) from whom information is required. The target population for this study was Grade 4 English Second Language teachers in selected Primary Schools in Katjinakatji Circuit within the Kavango West Region. The population size consisted of 100 English Second Language teachers.

### **3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

According to Brink (2016), a sample is a subset of the population selected to participate in the study. It is, therefore, a fraction of the whole, selected to participate in the research project. Ten male and female Grade 4 English second language instructors and learners from 3 selected schools in the Kavango West region made up the study's sample. In this case study both purposive and convenience sampling were

used. Purposive sampling is a “strategy to choose individuals likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 110). Convenience sampling “involves choosing the nearest willing individuals to serve as respondents as the researcher simply chooses the sample from those to whom they have easy access” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.114). The participating schools were selected for the following reasons: firstly, all the schools have Grade 4, secondly, all the selected schools used English second language as the medium of instruction in the Senior Primary Phase starting from Grade 4, all the schools are in one circuit and thus reasonably close to each other. These reduced travelling and other costs throughout the research project.

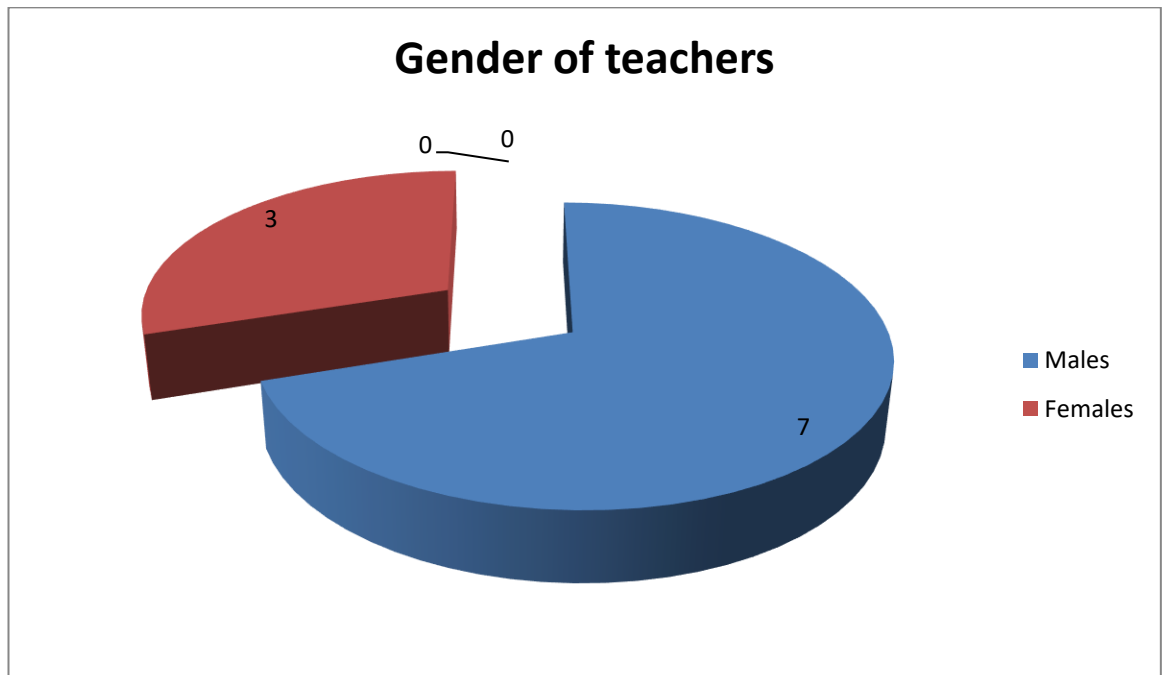
According to Newbay (2018), sampling refers to the selection of people or organisations from the whole population in the process. In this research study, the researcher made use of non-probability sampling techniques in collecting data because it is suitable for exploratory research. Non-probability sampling is a method of selecting units from a population using a subjective method. Due to limitations of time and monetary resources, the researcher made use of purposive sampling. Charles and Abbas (2019) explain that purposive sampling involves taking a sample of a small number of units from a much larger target population. The teachers were selected based on their working experience and their availability.

## **3.6. FINDINGS**

### **3.6.1 Demographic information**

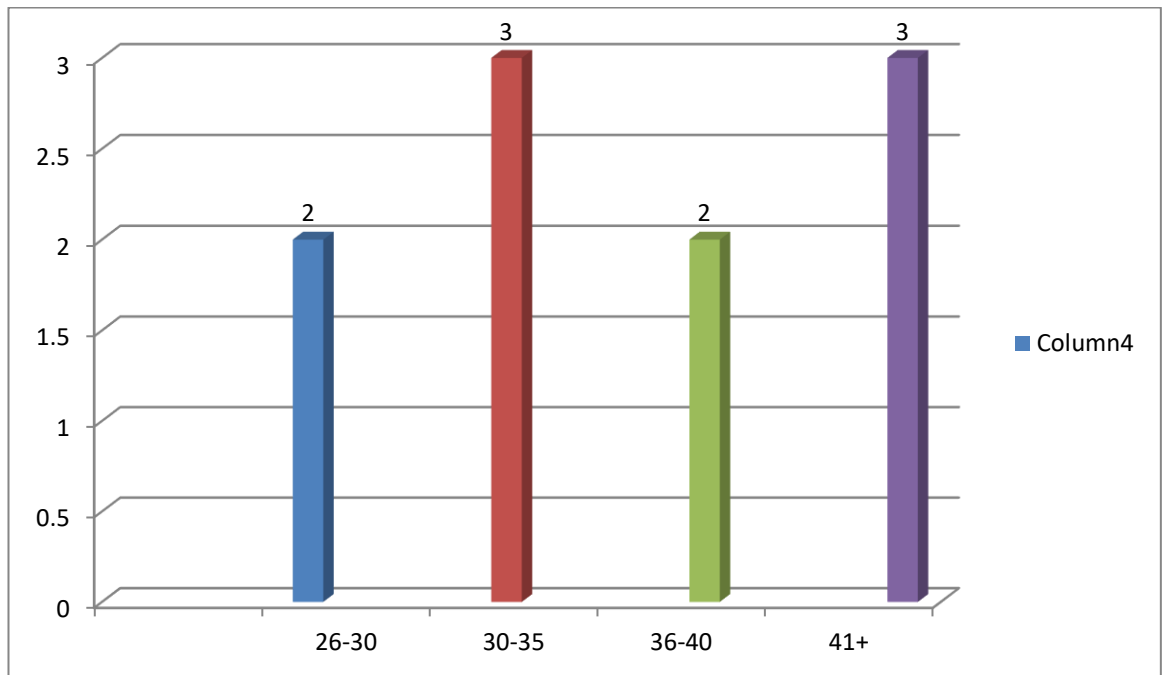
This section presents the demographic information such as gender, age and working experience of the participants in the research process. The participants comprise ten

English teachers currently teaching in Senior Primary schools in the Kavango West region, Namibia.



**Figure 1: Gender of teachers**

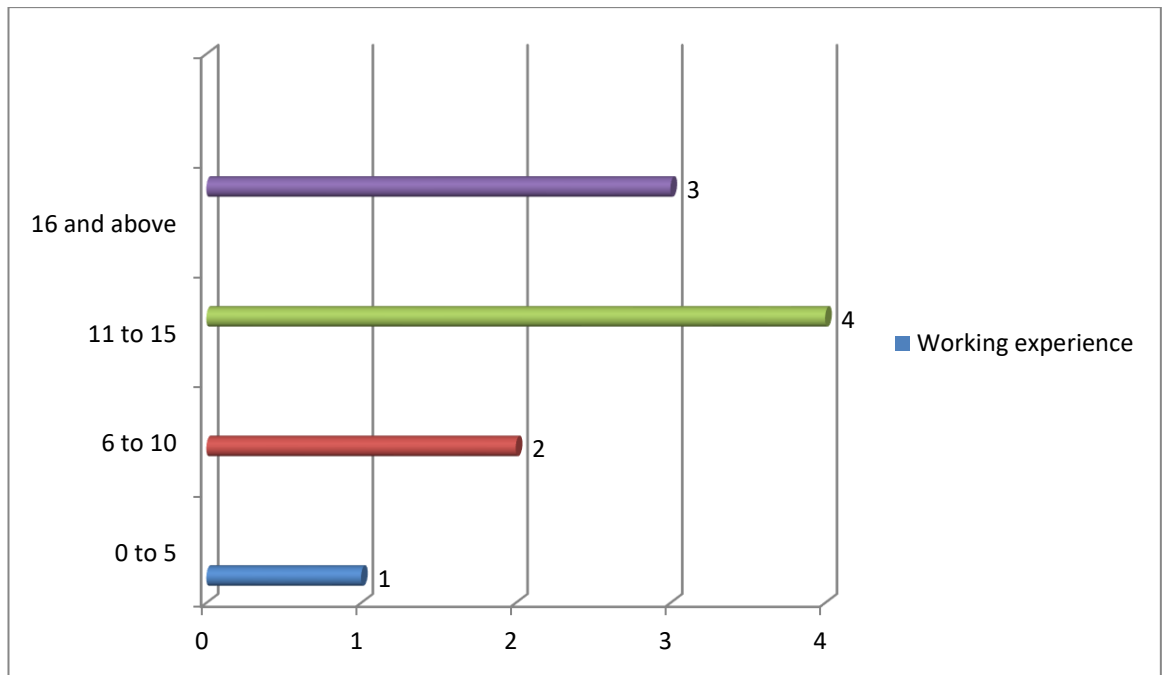
The above graph shows that there were seven male teachers who partook in the inquiry process and three female participants. The researcher made use of both genders so that different views can emerge from all gender concerning the factors that hinder reading comprehension in English in Grade 4 in Namibia.



**Figure 2: Age of teachers**

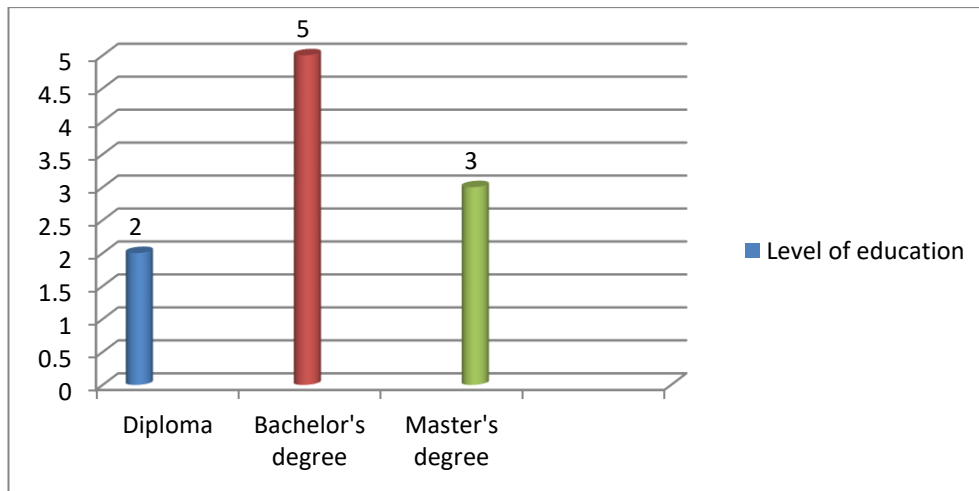
From the above graph, the researcher interviewed the participants from different age groups. It can be noted that most of the participants were aged 30-35 and 41+ years. This is an advantage because the school involved the young workforce which is still energetic and can bring new ideas concerning the factors that hinder reading comprehension in English in Grade 4 in Namibia.

The following graph presents the working experience of teachers:



**Figure 3: Working experience of teachers**

From the above graph, the working experience of the participants was different. Most of the participants were having 11 to 15 years of working experience. From the study, it can be seen that the teachers were well experienced which is a good thing since experience is the best teacher, so this will help in determining the factors that hinder reading comprehension in English in Grade 4 in Namibia.



**Figure 4: Level of Education**

From the above graph, most of the participants that were involved in the research process were holders of Bachelor’s Degrees. The researcher concluded that the participants should continue upgrading themselves so that they can know more about the factors that hinder reading comprehension in English in Grade 4 in Namibia.

### **3.7 Data collection methods**

Gay et al. (2018. P. 34) define research instruments as “tools that enable researchers to collect data”. The instruments that were used in this study were interviews, observations, and document analysis.

#### **3.7.1. Interviews**

Qualitative research interviews aim to elicit participants’ views of their lives, as portrayed in their stories, to gain access to their experiences, feelings and social worlds (Fossey et al., 2018). Once-off interviews were conducted with school principals, Grade 4 teachers and learners of the schools under study in Kavango West region. The interviews were audio recorded regardless of the language being used and then these

interviews will be later being transcribed. For this study, the researcher made use of semi-structured interviews. According to Fossey et al. (2018), semi-structured interviews are used to facilitate a more focused exploration of a specific topic, using an interview guide which contains a list of questions. The benefits of semi-structured interviews are that they create dialogue and a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interview questions were pre-set according to the research questions which were later expanded as the researcher got the answers from the participants. The researcher conducted a pilot study on the interview questions before the actual study was done.

#### **3.7.1.1 Pilot testing**

According to Fossey et al. (2018), it was usually desirable to run a pilot test on interview questions and to revise it to improve its reliability. Responses received after administering a pilot test help to determine the suitability of questions and time needed to execute the pilot test since the test could uncover a variety of feelings and reveal ambiguity and poorly worded questions. Pilot tests enabled the researcher to discover shortcomings of the interview guide and correct them before embarking on the actual research study. The main reason for piloting was to determine whether research instruments would serve the purpose for which they were designed. In this research, the researcher carried out pretesting using some of the teachers who did not take part in the final research. The interview guide for use in the actual research was revised based on the pre-test feedback. Corrections were made by rewriting questions in a way that all participants may comprehend. The importance of conducting this pilot study to the researcher was to determine the efficacy of the research instruments.

### **3.7.2 Observations**

The observation method was also used so that the level of immersion and prolonged involvement with participants could lead to a good rapport, thereby encouraging participants to speak up freely (Gay et al., 2019). The research instrument that was used for observation was the observation checklist. The researcher observed the Grade 4 learners during their English lessons to observe their reading comprehension strategies. It was important for the researcher to conduct classroom observations so that the researcher may have a glimpse of how the learners are tackling their reading comprehension. The researcher had an observation schedule (annexe 4) where the findings were recorded. The researcher faced the challenge of being unable to observe such things as attitudes, motivations, and learners' state of mind. Also, the active involvement of the learners caused the researcher to lose objectivity and led to bias.

### **3.7.3 Document analysis**

These are interpretations of primary data. According to Gay et al. (2019), they define secondary data as data that have been collected for some other purposes. Therefore, the secondary data that were used by the researcher were collected from learners' reading comprehension activities and their past performances. Learners' comprehension activities books were analysed checking their performances in the activities. This helped the researcher to have a sound background of what the topic is all about and it is easier for the researcher to make out what the gaps and deficiencies are and what additional information needs to be collected.

## **3.8 Data collection process**

Appointments were made with selected principals, teachers and learners who took part in the study. Individual interviews were conducted with teachers after school hours to

avoid disruption of the school activities. Each interview lasted for about 45 minutes and all interview sessions were audio recorded after obtaining the permission.

### **3.9 Data analysis process**

Data to be collected by the researcher was analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis emphasises identifying, analysing, and interpreting qualitative data patterns. With this analysis, the researcher could look at qualitative data in a certain way. It is usually used to describe a group of texts, like an interview or a set of transcripts (Gay & Airasian, 2018). The obtained data from the interviews was taped and transcribed manually. The transcription of the interview was coded into themes and categories for further discussions of the study. When using inductive thematic analysis, the researcher familiarised with the data, assigned preliminary codes to the data in order to describe the content, searched for patterns or themes in my codes across the different interviews, reviewed themes, defined and named themes and then produced a report. The researcher made use of tables, graphs and pie charts to analyse data quantitatively.

When presenting data, the researcher followed these steps:

**Familiarization:** The researcher became acquainted with the data by reading and re-reading it. This step helped to identify initial impressions and patterns (Fossey et al., 2021).

**Coding:** The data was systematically broken down into smaller units (codes). These codes represented themes, ideas, or patterns (Fossey et al., 2021).

**Generating themes:** Codes were grouped into broader themes. The researcher looked for commonalities and connections. Semantic themes focused on explicit content, while latent themes consider underlying meanings (Fossey et al., 2021).

Reviewing themes: the researcher reviewed and refined themes. The researcher compared codes and themes across the dataset to ensure consistency and coherence (Fossey et al., 2021).

Defining and naming themes: Themes were clearly defined and given descriptive names. The researcher considered the context and relevance of each theme (Fossey et al., 2021).

Writing up: Finally, the researcher wrote a report or paper, presenting the identified themes and their significance (Fossey et al., 2021).

### **3.9.1. Validity and reliability**

A measure of the veracity or untruth of the data collected by employing the study instrument was called validity. The items' validity shown whether they measure the things they are supposed to measure. The validity of qualitative research is established using a technique known as respondent validation. This, basically, involves testing the initial results with the participants to see if the results still ring true to overcome personal bias. The researcher used content validity and construct to examine whether the interview guide and observational guide answered the research question. Content validity assesses whether a test is representative of all aspects of the constructs (Fossey et al., 2018). To ensure content validity, the researcher developed a comprehensive literature review to identify all factors affecting reading comprehension in ESL learners. Construct validity ensures that the test truly measures the concept it claims to measure. To ensure this validity, the researcher used established theories and frameworks related to reading comprehension and ESL learning to design your research instruments (Fossey et al., 2018).

Reliability refers to the consistency of the research and the extent to which studies could be replicated (Burns & Bush, 2015). He explained reliability as demonstrating that the operations of a study such as the data collection procedure could be repeated with the same results. The researcher monitored the process to ensure that the right people attend the interviews by checking with the registers whether the learners were really in Grade 4. To ensure that there was validity and reliability of the data collected, the researcher would not rely on one type of research instrument but the researcher made use of a cross-validation method (triangulation). To ensure reliability, the researcher observed the lessons regarding reading comprehension at different occasions to the same group of learners at two different times and compared the results.

### **3.10 Ethical issues**

The researcher received an ethical clearance from UNAM, Permission from the Regional Director of Education in Kavango West region, and principals of schools in order to carry out the research. Data collection commenced immediately after the Permanent Secretary, the Director of Education in Kavango West region and the principals of the selected schools granted permission to conduct the study. The researcher agreed on a suitable date and time with the school principals and teachers for conducting interviews. Each participant completed an informed consent form. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Information given by participants remained confidential and they remained anonymous throughout the study. Participants were informed that the data obtained from this study was solely for partial fulfilment of the Master's degree and would not be published. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without feeling intimidated etc. The

researcher's data were anonymised after the completion of the current study, and after this point, no one should be able to trace the information back to the researcher. The data were stored in flash drives, iCloud and CDs in a place where only the supervisor and the researcher can access. The anonymous information should be retained for up to two years where it should be deleted/ destroyed.

### **3.11 Summary**

The chapter portrayed methods that were used by the researcher to collect data in the Kavango West region. The data collection instruments used was observations and interviews. A qualitative research approach was used. A sample of the population was drawn from the Kavango West region. The researcher ensured the anonymity of participants and the confidentiality of information obtained from them. Data collection, analysis and presentation procedure were also highlighted. The next chapter turns to data presentation, analysis and interpretation.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The prior chapter focused on the research methods that were used in the collection of data. This chapter will cover the demographic information of the participants, presentation of the raw data that is speaking to the research questions. The data that was analysed in this study comprised mainly oral and written texts. The researcher used a qualitative approach to obtain data from participants using data collection methods of interviews, classroom observation and documentary evidence. The presentation and discussion of data were done based on the findings from the field research conducted by the researcher.

### **4.2 Presentation of findings**

The following is the presentation and the discussion of the data. Participants who took part in the study were given pseudonyms. The ten participants will be labelled from A to J. The reason for giving pseudonyms is to protect the research participants. Taking active efforts to conceal participants' identities is all about anonymity as a form of confidentiality. The study findings were presented in three themes which are based on the following research questions:

1. What are the possible difficulties that Grade 4 learners at the selected schools encounter in English second language reading comprehension?
2. What in the teachers' view are the factors that contribute to challenges encountered in English second language reading comprehension by Grade 4 learners?
3. What strategies can be used to improve learners' reading comprehension in English as a second language in Grade 4?

**Theme 1: possible difficulties that Grade 4 learners at the selected schools encounter in English second language reading comprehension**

Inadequate vocabulary development and lack of reading fluency emerged from the participants as common themes that hinder reading comprehension of the Grade 4 learners at the selected schools. The participants expressed that inadequate vocabulary hindered reading comprehension by making it challenging for learners to understand the meaning of the words within the text. The following were the responses from the participants:

Participant A said:

*'most of the learners are not fluent when it comes to reading. Also, they do not understand what they read and will even fail to respond to the questions asked. Learners fail to identify the key words from the text/passage.'*

Participant B also remarked:

*'learners do not know how to read individual words. They face a lot of difficulties in understanding the vocabulary which is extracted from the texts read. The learners said that although the teacher is helping them on reading they are failing to comprehend.'*

Participant C also lamented that:

*'learners have difficulties in pronouncing words/letters. Most of them they do not know the alphabetical letters, parts of speech such as common nouns, nouns or verbs. It's a very big challenge.'*

Participant D also stated that:

*'leaners have a problem in understanding phrases or sentences used in the text. This will make them to face difficulties when trying to comprehend what they have learned.'*

Similarly, Participant E claimed that:

*'lack of understanding of the meaning of the words used in the text it's a challenge for our learners. Some of the learners are also not able to read certain words in the text.'*

Participant F also commented that:

*'some of the learners make use of wrong spellings of words when giving answers. This means that they do not understand even the meaning of these words. This will be difficult for them to grasp what they have learnt.'*

The above utterances are all speaking to inadequate vocabulary and inability to understand reading texts. They have unanimously acknowledged the pivotal role the vocabulary development in shaping reading comprehension. Asked why they thought learners' vocabulary was poor, the participants indicated that this could be due to limited exposure to a variety of words both in context and explicit instructions in grade 3. They further indicated that when learners come to Grade 4, transition from mother tongue as a medium of instruction, to English, they have not really developed adequate vocabulary to be able to understand reading materials in English in Grade 4.

From the classroom observations that were done by the researcher during the English lesson 1 when the teacher was teaching reading comprehension, learners had to read a

story titled “*Human rights and democracy*” and answer questions. It was noted that the learners demonstrated challenges in reading comprehension. They were not able to pronounce the words correctly. In addition, when asked the questions from the text they had read, learners were failing to answer the questions asked.

**PART 1: Reading Skills and Grammar**

**TASK 1:**

Instructions: Read the story “A cat called Mouse” and answer the question that follow.

**A cat called Mouse**

Helena has a cat called Mouse. Mouse is a very fat cat. Mouse does not like to play or cuddle. She just likes to eat and sleep. Sometimes, Mouse likes to nap on the couch and sometimes she likes to nap under the piano.

Mouse is not a very brave cat. She is frightened of everything. She is scared of people, cars, water and thunder. She is even afraid of other cats.

One day, Mouse was having her afternoon nap on the couch when something woke her up. She heard the patter of tiny feet. Lazily, Mouse opened one eye. Then she meowed in fright and jumped up onto the back of the couch. A little rat was creeping across the room.

The rat froze and looked at Mouse. It had not seen Mouse sleeping on the couch, but now it knew that it was in danger. Quickly, the rat ran away. Then Mouse went back to sleep.

1. Who is the owner of the cat?  
 Mouse \_\_\_\_\_ (1)
2. Mention one thing that mouse does not like to do.  
 likes to nap on the couch and sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ (1)
3. Find the word with the *opposite meaning* of the word “**thin**” from paragraph 1.  
 She likes to nap under the piano \_\_\_\_\_ (1)
4. Change the underlined word into present tense.  
 She heard the patter of tiny feet. not like to play or cuddle (1)
5. Write a sentence using the word “little”  
 Quickly \_\_\_\_\_ (1)

**TOTAL: 5 MARKS**

**Figure 5: Sample of a reading comprehension script**

Figure 5 above illustrates a reading comprehension activity that was written at one of the participating schools. The learner seems to have no clue of what the questions were about and hence did not answer any question correctly. Research indicates that learners' failure to answer reading comprehension questions correctly could be due to various reasons, among others, lack of understanding of the reading text, insufficient background knowledge, difficulty with the language or vocabulary used in the questions or cognitive challenges (Derchant, 2019). These factors are dealt with in the discussion section.

**Theme 2: The possible factors that contribute to difficulties encountered in English second language reading comprehension.**

When asked about the possible factors that contribute to difficulties encountered in English Second Language reading comprehension, participants had this to say:

Participant A said:

*'The decline in reading capabilities of our learners can be ascribed to the dramatic changes in teaching methods as a result of the implementation of the new curriculum whereby we witnessed a decline in the literacy levels of the learners'.*

Participant C also lamented that:

*'lack of support for teaching in the new curriculum is one of the challenges of teaching reading in the school. We are ignored by all literacy coaches, namely; heads of department, principals and curriculum advisors. Teachers do not receive professional development and they find the new curriculum methods of teaching reading very difficult to implement.'*

Participant D also highlighted that:

*'the major challenge faced when teaching reading comprehension is lack of self-efficacy which is the individual's judgments and perceptions of our very own learners about whether they are capable of doing well and accomplishing a task.'*

Participant stated that:

*'Teachers felt frustrated in implementing reading strategies because of heavy workloads. As they first had to teach the language and vocabulary for specific content, they found it impossible to complete the syllabus for the year'.*

Teacher F also highlighted that:

*'parents' limited involvement with their children's school work further is another challenge teacher are facing in implementing reading strategies so that learners can be fluent in reading comprehension.'*

Participant G also indicated that:

*'discipline problems amongst learners which are caused by large class sizes are a major challenge we face when teaching reading. As teachers sometimes we fail to manage these big numbers and it will be difficult to teach these learners how to read comprehensions.'*

Participant H also quoted:

*'Lack of support from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture causes a problem in teaching reading. Teachers need a greater availability of support teams for learners who need them and this can only be attained when there is support from the Ministry'.*

Participant I also mentioned that:

*'there is a problem caused by in transfers of learners. Some of these new comers they do not even know how to read at all. So it will be difficult now for the teacher to groom this learner in reading so that he/she can be at par with the others.'*

Participant J also lamented that:

*'some of our learners do not have the habit of reading on their own. They wait for the teachers to push them to read on their own. Even at their homes, these are the same learners that do not study at all.'*

Through the observation, the researcher discovered that a lack of textbooks was a major challenge because most of the learners were sharing and it was not enough for them all. So through this sharing, some of the learners shift their attention from concentrating on the passage being read and end up doing their own things. This caused the learners not to comprehend what was being taught by the teacher.

### **Theme 3: Strategies that can be used to improve learners' reading comprehension in English as a second language.**

To the question of strategies that can be used to improve the learners' reading comprehension, participants responded differently. These are the responses from the participants:

Participant A suggested that:

*'educators should use the concept of talking and listening when teaching their learners reading comprehension. Talking and listening*

*is a building block for children to obtain reading ability because when children reach the age of one, children have knowledge of a spoken language by talking and listening.'*

Participant B also said that:

*'educators should make use of print and books because they contribute to a child's development in reading. These prints and books enable learners to have print awareness which involves holding a book the right way and reading lines in a book from left to right. Children who understand print awareness will be able to connect the words they see to the words they say. Print knowledge is a central component of emergent literacy development and a worthy goal of primary prevention efforts'.*

Participant C also stated that:

*'phonological awareness can be used as a strategy of improving reading as it leads to successful readers. Phonological awareness is an understanding that words that rhyme are divided into syllables and are a combination of sounds. So with phonological awareness learners are able to hear and work with the sounds of the spoken language'.*

Participant D also commented that:

*'reading of comprehension can be improved through letter recognition whereby learners memorize the alphabet song. Letter recognition is a predictor of reading achievement. When learners are able to recognize and name the upper- and lower-case letters, they will have better success in learning to read'.*

Participant E also suggested that:

*'teachers can make use of reading aloud as it is beneficial for the chances of learners becoming successful readers. Reading aloud, with children participating actively, helps children learn connection between words that are spoken and words that are written. Reading aloud to children can increase a child's vocabulary, increase listening comprehension skills, promote syntactic development, and lead to word identification. Read-aloud provides a wonderful opportunity to promote children's love of literature, and they can be a treasured time together.'*

Participant also said that:

*'teachers must give opportunities for learners to read independently because when a learner feels capable, in control of their learning, he/she develops an interest in their reading, and feels connected to the text or story, the learner will have motivation. Learners should be provided with reading materials which include magazines, news articles, comic books, etc. If a learner is engaged in the topic he or she is reading, he will be more inclined to read again.'*

Participant G also suggested that:

*'teachers should also incorporate small groups into instruction since these encourage communication amongst learners. Communication amongst these groups could lead to questions, debate, deep questioning, and discussion. These small groups also lead to differentiation in the classroom and learners can read to one another*

*and reading with a peer motivates struggling readers to read a text that might be a little higher than the normal text they read.'*

Participant H also commented that:

*'compensatory teaching should be done whereby teacher conduct extra classes with struggling learners and then drill them. Also, model reading can be done whereby learners repeat words after the teacher reads to them first.'*

Participant I also stated that:

*'teachers should make use of bank words with their meanings and read them aloud. Learners should be provided with interesting texts/stories so that they can develop an interest in reading. In addition, parents should be encouraged to take part in literacy programs so that they can help the learners. Reciprocal teaching should also be encouraged.'*

The researcher observed that if only teachers can link passages/stories to real-life situations, learners may be able to comprehend what is being taught. Also, the use of online resources can make learners more interested in seeing those visuals so that they can create their own mental images on drawing when reading text with illustrations. From the above points, the researcher concluded that teachers should go the extra mile in trying to resources so that they can teach reading comprehension. Teachers should not rely on the resources being provided by the school only but should also be resourceful.

### **4.3. Discussion of the findings**

#### **4.3.1. Interpretation of findings**

It was noted that learners are not fluent when it comes to reading. From this, it can be commented that comprehension typically requires previous knowledge of incorporating these words and sentences within the understanding of the context and the meaning of the text.

It was also revealed that learners do not know how to read individual words. The results showed that most of the learners were not able to read words so a lot needs to be done so that learners may be able to read comprehension

Learners have difficulties in pronouncing words/letters. The researcher, therefore, concluded that such students may suffer from limited reading comprehension strategies and will find it difficult to read or write.

Learners have a problem understanding phrases or sentences used in the text. The researcher recommended giving students more motivation to develop understanding by using discussion among students and teachers and by increasing activities in the classroom. This is related to the Grade 4 learners under study because some of them have no interest in learning to read comprehensions.

Lack of understanding of the meaning of the words used in the text was seen as a challenge for the learners. The researcher concluded that such learners will have a problem with skimming and scanning the reading material, lack vocabulary knowledge, poor reading skills and lose focus.

The decline in reading capabilities of the learners was ascribed to the dramatic changes in teaching methods as a result of the implementation of the new curriculum. The

researcher, therefore, concluded that the introduction of the new curriculum was a contributing hindrance to the reading skills of the learners.

The major challenge faced when teaching reading comprehension was a lack of self-efficacy which is the individual's judgments and perceptions. From the above, the researcher therefore concluded that lack of self-efficacy leads teachers to face challenges when teaching reading. The learners lacked inner belief when it comes to reading comprehension.

Teachers felt frustrated in implementing reading strategies because of heavy workloads. The researcher is of the notion that heavy workloads cause many teachers to face challenges in teaching reading. Teachers were finding it difficult to attend to the needs of all the learners.

Parents' limited involvement with their children's school work further was seen as another challenge teacher face when it comes to implementing reading strategies. The researcher, therefore, concluded that the lack of involvement by parents in teaching learners English reading skills makes it challenging for the teacher to try to instil these reading cultures in the learners.

Discipline problems amongst learners which were caused by large class sizes were a major challenge teacher's face when teaching reading. From the above, the researcher concluded that the lack of discipline causes a major challenge to teachers when teaching reading. Teachers find it difficult to control and manage the classes due to big sizes.

The researcher also noted that lack of support from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture also causes a setback in the teaching of English reading comprehension

amongst learners. This was negatively affecting the teachers because when they seek help no one will come to their aid.

In conclusion, findings that emerged from observation and interviews showed that the shared reading method, whole language method and phonics method are the most prevalent methods used by the teachers. Different reading instructional methods were used differently by teachers, however, learners performed poorly in reading in English second language due to the inability to pronounce most of the sounds, lack of parental assistance, and the environment where learners come from. It can be summarised that the factors that hamper the learners' abilities to read are mother tongue influence, cognitive problems and lack of ability to differentiate the vowel sounds in English and their mother tongues as well as the lack of recognition of letters. The researcher observed that there was a lack of teaching resources which should be used to aid the teaching and learning process.

#### **4.3.2 Comparison with literature**

It was discovered that most of the learners are not fluent when it comes to reading and they do not understand what they read and will even fail to respond to the questions asked. The findings coincide with Oakhill and Elbro (2019) who believe that reading comprehension is a complex process which requires the organisation of prior cognitive skills and abilities. Besides, when readers are not able to understand the whole text, they will encounter difficulties in decoding words in such text. Reading comprehension generally depends on comprehending the target language. This requires comprehending words, sentences, and contexts of the text. Yet, comprehension typically requires the previous knowledge of incorporating these

words and sentences within the understanding of the context and the meaning of the text.

It was also revealed from the study that learners do not know how to read individual words. These findings are also consistent with Keeves and Darmawana (2017) who contend that reading presents a special challenge because from Grade 4 onwards, all learning materials are written in English and learners must be fluent readers in the English language in order to succeed at school. The above findings echo the claim of Pang et al., (2019) which implies that reading was “understanding written texts” (p. 6). They believe that reading includes two interrelated processes: prior knowledge and comprehension. They defined prior knowledge as the process that helps learners to improve and expand their abilities of comprehension, while comprehension was the process of making the meaning of words or sentences in the text. Pang et al. (2019) also state that readers should have background knowledge, vocabulary, and other strategies to understand written texts.

According to Rose (2006), the ability to understand these complexities provides students with access to written codes of knowledge, and the ability to unlock the usefulness of “devices” used to convey meaning. Given that students in secondary schooling and tertiary education in South Africa are required to read “specialised” academic texts to access curriculum content, and subsequently write about the material, an ability to access the three levels of texts becomes crucial. Arguably, most teachers believe that the availability of subject-specific technical terms, together with

their definitions, is sufficient for English Second Language (ESL) students to access meaning within abstract, technical texts.

It was also indicated from the study that learners have difficulties in pronouncing words/letters. This aligns with Cain et al. (2020) who believe that students struggle with reading comprehension, and fail in the automatic recognition of words, and sentences as a result of poor memory, and loss of strategies related to reading comprehension or ideas in the text. Such students may suffer from (limited reading comprehension strategies). Similarly, Ziegler and Goswami (2018) argue that despite the similar developmental trajectory of phonological representation across many European languages, reading acquisition itself varies markedly across the very same languages. They further argue that this is attributed to some factors, such as consistency of spellings to sound relations, granularity (grain size) of orthographic and phonological representation and teaching methods.

It was also indicated that learners have a problem understanding phrases or sentences used in the text. This corresponds with Iqbal et al. (2020) research paper that aimed to reveal factors responsible for weak English reading comprehension at secondary school level students in Pakistan. The study aimed to explore those factors and suggest remedies for how to strengthen the English reading comprehension of the students. The researchers selected (60) tenth-grade students and conducted a test and interviews to collect the needed data. The result of the study showed those different factors such as poor command of vocabulary, the habit of cramming, and no interest to learn creativity in reading played a role in hindering comprehension. The researchers

recommended giving students more motivation to develop understanding by using discussion among students and teachers and by increasing activities in the classroom. This is related to the Grade 4 learners under study because some of them have no interest in learning to read comprehensions.

It was also revealed from the study that a lack of understanding of the meaning of the words used in the text is a challenge for our learners. This is in line with Nezami (2020) who conducted a study that aimed to identify the main difficulties Saudi students encountered in comprehending English reading skills. This study aimed to find out reading problems inside classrooms faced by Arab learners in general. The study came with a wide range of difficulties such as incompetence in skimming and scanning the reading material, lacking vocabulary knowledge, poor reading skills and losing focus. Similarly, Griffiths and Snowling (2018) proffer that difficulties in acquiring phonological awareness and skills in alphabetic coding, in many cases are believed to be due to weak phonological coding characterised by the poor quality of the underlying 'sub-lexical phonological' representations. Teachers need to note that skills of acquiring phonological awareness, and similarly the skills in alphabetic coding require intervention in order to address the status quo. A study by Comeau et al. (2019) emphasises that lack of adequate experience with English sounds and patterns makes the English Second Language (ESL) learner unable to recognise a sound, discriminate and use those in speech. This inability, in turn, makes it difficult for students to sound out words in print, resulting in reading difficulties.

The study also highlighted that the decline in reading capabilities of our learners can be ascribed to the dramatic changes in teaching methods as a result of the implementation of the new curriculum. This is in line with the results from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2020) which revealed that Namibian learners are still struggling in terms of literacy skills, especially in reading. The new curriculum is a hindrance, firstly because of negative societal attitudes toward African languages, which may affect learners' motivation and confidence in using their mother tongue or other local languages. In addition, inadequate teacher training, which may result in poor pedagogical practices and insufficient support for learners' language development is another hindrance. Moreover, the influence of international organisations, which may pressure Namibia to adopt English as the medium of instruction and assessment, despite the evidence that learning in a foreign language is ineffective and does not support learner-centred pedagogies or higher-order thinking skills is another factor. Finally, it is because of the confusion and difficulty that learners face when they have to switch from their home language to English as the language of learning and teaching, which may affect their comprehension and performance in different subjects (MOEAC, 2020).

The findings are also supported by Mutenda (2018) who states that some of the teachers do not vary their methods of teaching reading and that their monotonous style does not stimulate learners to learn. Likely, the teachers who teach learners in that way (monotonous style) are not responsive to the demands and needs of the present-day situation. Wimmer (2019) states that by using an eclectic approach to teach young learners, teachers are directly and indirectly developing reading skills in their learners.

This strategy applies a bottom-up approach which includes phonics and ‘look and say’ and a top-down strategy, which is all composed of extensive reading, contextualisation and pictorial clues. Rose and Martin (2012) attempt to make a case for the fact that literacy development curricula at schools fail to provide explicit instruction in reading and writing after the first two years of schooling. This is often linked to competence models of education (Rose, 2005). Incompetence models of schooling, the literacy development curriculum presupposes an already established, innate educational competency because all students arrive at school with the necessary pre-orientations to the dominant discourse of formal education (Rose, 2005).

It was also revealed that the major challenge faced when teaching reading comprehension is a lack of self-efficacy. This concurs with Vesely (2018) who said that reading self-efficacy has been found to correlate positively with different measures of reading such as reading comprehension, breadth of reading and amount of reading outside of school. Rose (2005) articulates that one way students can communicate their ideas, acquired through the reading of subject-related texts, is through written exercises. Again, this would require a deep understanding and knowledge of ‘genres’ used in the formal educational domain including their social purpose, and organisational patterns based on their purpose.

It was also indicated that teachers felt frustrated in implementing reading strategies because of heavy workloads. This is in correspondence with O’Connor and Geiger (2019) who said that large numbers of learners in classes increased the workload in all

teaching areas such as marking and preparation of lessons, leaving teachers feeling overworked and resentful.

The findings also showed that parents' limited involvement with their children's school work further is another challenge teachers are facing in implementing reading strategies. This is also supported by Dawber and Jordaan (2018) who said that teachers were aware of the benefits of encouraging parents to use their first language when helping children with homework as well as creating opportunities for children to listen and interact in English but sometimes parents could not assist their children's school work as they did not understand English. This was also supported by Keeves et al. (2017) who argue that poor reading in English Second Language is attributed to the following factors, namely the poor school and home environment that do not support learners to master reading English as a second language.

These findings are also in correspondence with Hugo (2018) who asserts that some learners in South Africa start their formal schooling in their home language and after three years during which English is taught to them as a Second Language (L2), the language still becomes a barrier in reading. It appears that the challenge of reading in English may be because some children start their formal school education through the medium of English, which is their Second Language (L2). In other words, learners who first start learning a Second Language rather than their First Language are likely to encounter challenges in reading because they might lack a balanced bilingualism. Similarly, the lower phase of primary education is blamed for the learners' poor reading in English, the arguments and assumptions being that the grounding in reading English second language in the foundation phase is not properly laid right from Grades 1- 4. Although this might be part of the problem, there may be other factors, for

example, not all children are immersed in the same type of supportive environment at home and school where their literacy growth can be enhanced (Keeves & Darmawana, 2017).

In addition, Ziegler and Goswami (2018) state that for children to acquire reading, they must learn codes used in their culture for representing speech as a form of visual symbols and learning to read is thus fundamentally a process of matching distinctive visual symbols to units of sound (phonology). Equally, Zeigler and Goswami (2018) observe that in some languages, there may be fewer problems with learning to read in a more transparent orthography than a less transparent one. Furthermore, Savage et al. (2018) contend that English is known to be forward irregular and backward irregular for both reading and spelling. Thus, phonological decoding skills remain a major obstacle for reading and spelling in the English language for many learners who learn English as a Second Language.

According to Bernstein (1996), this is a possible reason why children from working-class homes are more prone to underperformance in comparison to students from middle-class homes. A possible reason for this is the restrictions to various speech codes that working-class children encounter prior to starting school. Therefore, teachers should be offering suitable classroom practices that could help working-class students produce and respond better to meaning through apt codes of speech. In a schooling context, this may take the form of elaborated codes of consciousness.

Rose (2005) articulates that children from high-literate, middle-class families supposedly spent approximately 1000 hours engaging with reading material through their parents before school. Consequently, these students are more likely to develop the relevant skills necessary to engage efficiently with written texts. As a result, these

students will be more likely able to learn to read within the early years of schooling. On the contrary, students coming from low-literate homes tend to have less access to written stories. As a result, these students are more likely to find it difficult to engage with written texts. Consequently, developing the skills necessary to become fluent readers early on in school might be an issue. These difficulties are compounded during each year of schooling as the curriculum increasingly demands more of these students. Subsequently, students like these tend to fall behind.

It was also stipulated that discipline problems amongst learners which are caused by large class sizes are a major challenge we face when teaching reading. This concurs with Du Plessis and Naude (2018) as they indicate that teachers frequently experienced discipline problems with learners with large classes being notably more difficult than small classes, due to limited comprehension skills in learners and cultural mismatches between them and teachers.

The study also exposed that lack of support from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture causes a problem in teaching reading. This coincides with Waddle (2017) who said that teachers need workshops and training for effective reading and although they had attended workshops on teaching English as a Second Language, teachers want to observe practical demonstrations on how to implement the strategies with their learners.

#### **4.3.3 Impact of acculturation on language acquisition**

Grade 4 learners are at a stage where they are developing their cognitive, linguistic, and social skills. They are also exposed to different sources of language input, such as school, family, peers, and media. Acculturation experiences may impact their language acquisition in different ways, depending on the type and degree of acculturation they

undergo. According to Schumann's acculturation model, there are two main types of acculturation: additive and subtractive. Additive acculturation occurs when learners maintain their native language and culture while acquiring a second language and culture. Subtractive acculturation occurs when learners lose their native language and culture as they acquire a second language and culture.

Additive acculturation may have positive effects on language acquisition, as learners can benefit from the transfer of skills and knowledge from their native language to the second language. They can also develop a positive attitude and identity towards both languages and cultures and receive social support from their ethnic community and the host society. However, subtractive acculturation may have negative effects on language acquisition, as learners may experience a loss of skills and knowledge from their native language, and face difficulties in communicating with their family and ethnic community. They may also develop a negative attitude and identity towards their native language and culture, and face discrimination or isolation from the host society (Hann, 2018).

Therefore, acculturation experiences can impact language acquisition among Grade 4 learners in various ways, depending on the type and degree of acculturation they undergo. Teachers and parents can play a role in facilitating additive acculturation and preventing subtractive acculturation by providing learners with opportunities to use and learn both languages and cultures and by fostering a positive and respectful environment for linguistic and cultural diversity.

According to Schumann, the more social and psychological distance there is between the learner and the target language group, the less likely the learner is to acculturate and achieve high levels of proficiency in the second language. Conversely, the less

social and psychological distance there is, the more likely the learner is to acculturate and succeed in learning the second language (Hann, 2018).

Other theoretical frameworks that can be used to explain language acquisition and learning include Level's model of speech production, Nation's four strands model, Segalowitz and Gatbonton's ACCESS model, and Swain's output hypothesis. These models focus on different aspects of language learning, such as lexical knowledge, automatic processing, communicative context, essential speech segments, and learner output (Kidd, 2017).

#### **4.3.5. Implications for reading comprehension**

It can be noted that vocabulary size and depth are important for reading comprehension because they enable readers to access the meaning of the text and make inferences. Adams (2019) has shown that vocabulary knowledge is strongly correlated with reading comprehension and that vocabulary instruction can improve reading comprehension outcomes.

Orthography is the system of writing and spelling in a language. Orthographic knowledge is the ability to recognise and produce the written symbols of a language. From the study, it can be evidenced that orthographic knowledge facilitates reading comprehension by enabling readers to decode and encode words quickly and accurately. It also helps readers to identify word boundaries, morphemes, and word families.

Syntax is the set of rules that govern the structure and order of words and phrases in a sentence. Syntactic knowledge is the ability to apply and understand these rules (Sijave, 2017). The study revealed that syntactic knowledge aids reading

comprehension by helping readers parse and analyse sentences, identify the roles and relationships of words, and construct coherent representations of the text.

Grammar is the set of rules that govern the formation and usage of words, phrases, and clauses in a language. Grammatical knowledge is the ability to apply and understand these rules (Harmer, 2017). From these findings, it implies that grammatical knowledge supports reading comprehension by helping readers to recognise and resolve ambiguities, errors, and inconsistencies in the text, and to use appropriate forms and functions of language for different purposes and contexts.

Pragmatics is the study of how language is used in social situations and how meaning is conveyed beyond the literal words. Pragmatic knowledge is the ability to use and understand language appropriately and effectively in various communicative contexts (Harris, 2018). It is evident that pragmatic knowledge enhances reading comprehension by enabling readers to infer the intentions, perspectives, and emotions of the author and the characters, and to relate the text to their own experiences and knowledge.

However, it can be noted that acculturation experiences influence reading comprehension in several ways. For example:

Acculturation experiences can affect the motivation and interest of readers. Readers who have positive and supportive acculturation experiences may develop a higher motivation and interest in reading texts in the new language and culture, while readers who have negative and stressful acculturation experiences may develop a lower motivation and interest in reading texts in the new language and culture.

It is also evident from the study that acculturation experiences can affect the background knowledge and schema of readers. Readers who have rich and diverse

acculturation experiences may acquire more background knowledge and schema about the new language and culture, which can help them to activate prior knowledge, make connections, and fill in gaps when reading texts in the new language and culture. Readers who have limited and narrow acculturation experiences may lack sufficient background knowledge and schema about the new language and culture, which can hinder them from activating prior knowledge, making connections, and filling in gaps when reading texts in the new language and culture.

In addition, acculturation experiences can affect the cognitive skills and strategies of readers. Readers who have challenging and stimulating acculturation experiences may develop more cognitive skills and strategies for reading comprehension, such as comprehension monitoring, summarising, inferencing, comparing and contrasting, drawing conclusions, self-questioning, problem-solving, relating background knowledge, distinguishing between fact and opinion, finding the main idea, important facts, and supporting details, etc. Readers who have easy and passive acculturation experiences may develop fewer cognitive skills and strategies for reading comprehension.

Other factors that influence reading comprehension abilities include:

The type and genre of the text: Different types and genres of texts have different structures, features, purposes, and audiences, which require different levels and types of comprehension skills and strategies. For example, narrative texts typically have a clear plot, setting, and characters, and require readers to comprehend the sequence of events, the motivations and actions of the characters, and the themes and messages of the story. Expository texts typically have a logical organisation, headings, and

graphics, and require readers to comprehend the main idea, the supporting details, the facts and opinions, and the arguments and evidence of the text.

The difficulty and familiarity of the text: The difficulty and familiarity of the text depend on factors such as the length, complexity, and coherence of the sentences, the frequency, difficulty, and clarity of the words, the amount and quality of the background knowledge and schema required, and the level and type of the inferences and connections needed. The difficulty and familiarity of the text affect the amount and type of cognitive effort and resources that readers need to allocate for reading comprehension. Generally, the more difficult and unfamiliar the text is, the more cognitive effort and resources are needed, and vice versa.

The purpose and context of reading: The purpose and context of reading refer to the goals and situations that motivate and shape the reading process. The purpose and context of reading affect the type and level of comprehension skills and strategies that readers use and apply. For example, readers who read for pleasure may use more affective and personal comprehension skills and strategies, such as relating the text to their own experiences and emotions, while readers who read for learning may use more cognitive and academic comprehension skills and strategies, such as summarising and synthesising the information from the text (Harmer, 2017).

### ***Consideration of educational implications and potential interventions***

One of the main implications of reading comprehension research is that reading comprehension is not a single skill, but a complex and multifaceted process that involve various components, such as inference, knowledge, vocabulary, and comprehension monitoring. These components play prominent roles across different theories of reading comprehension and are integral for understanding text. Moreover,

these components are influenced by individual differences, such as prior knowledge, language proficiency, motivation, and cognitive abilities, as well as by contextual factors, such as text characteristics, task demands, and instructional practices.

Another implication of reading comprehension research is that reading comprehension is a developmental and cumulative process that requires early and sustained instruction across grade levels. Research has shown that reading comprehension difficulties often emerge in the early grades and persist over time, leading to a widening achievement gap between struggling and proficient readers. Therefore, it is crucial to identify and intervene with students who are at risk of reading comprehension problems as early as possible, and to provide them with ongoing support and monitoring throughout their schooling.

A third implication of reading comprehension research is that reading comprehension is a domain-general and domain-specific process that requires both general and specific knowledge and skills. Research has shown that reading comprehension is influenced by both general reading skills, such as decoding, fluency, and vocabulary, and specific content knowledge, such as science, history, and literature. Therefore, it is important to provide students with both broad and deep instruction that covers a range of topics and genres, and that fosters both general and specific comprehension strategies.

Based on these implications, some of the potential interventions that can help improve reading comprehension are:

*Proactive Reading:* This is a small-group intervention that targets foundational skills, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension for students in Grade 4. It consists of four components: phonemic awareness and phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and

comprehension. It uses explicit, systematic, and interactive instruction, as well as frequent assessment and feedback. It has been shown to produce large effects on foundational skills, fluency, and reading comprehension outcomes for English Language.

*Sound Partners:* This is a one-to-one intervention that focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency for students in Grade 4. It uses scripted lessons that follow a clear sequence of skills, as well as decodable texts that match the learners' instructional level. It has been shown to be effective even when delivered for a shorter duration, and to improve foundational skills and reading comprehension outcomes for English Language.

*Early Vocabulary Connection:* This is a small-group intervention that targets oral language and vocabulary for students in Grade 4. It uses rich and engaging texts that introduce new words in meaningful contexts, as well as explicit instruction, multiple exposures, and active engagement. It has also been shown to have large effects on oral language outcomes for ELs, which can also support reading comprehension.

*Reciprocal Teaching:* This is a small-group or whole-class intervention that targets comprehension and metacognition for students in Grades 2–6. It uses four strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarising, to help students monitor and improve their understanding of texts. It uses scaffolded instruction, guided practice, and peer collaboration, as well as authentic and diverse texts. It has been shown to improve comprehension and metacognitive skills for English Language.

*Questioning the Author:* This is a whole-class intervention that targets comprehension and critical thinking for students in Grades 3–7. It uses open-ended questions that prompt students to analyse the author's purpose, message, and craft, and to evaluate

the quality and clarity of the text. It uses dialogic instruction, collaborative discussion, and text reformulation, as well as challenging and varied texts. It has been shown to improve comprehension and critical thinking skills.

#### **4.4 Educational policy implications**

One of the factors that hinder reading comprehension is the environment, which includes the home and school settings. According to a study by Hann (2018), family problems, such as divorce, financial hardship, and sibling bullying, can negatively affect children's academic achievement and reading comprehension. Therefore, educational policies should aim to provide support and guidance for learners and their families who face such challenges and create a safe and conducive learning environment for them. Moreover, the school environment, especially the availability and quality of the library and its resources, can also impact reading comprehension. Weaver (2019) found that the number of full-time school librarians and staff, the size of the school library, and the interaction between librarians and teachers were all related to higher reading scores. Thus, curriculum development should include the integration of library-Centered instruction and the promotion of reading culture among learners and teachers.

Another factor that hinders reading comprehension is the text, which refers to the features and organisation of the written material. According to Carver (2019), text factors, such as the genre, the structure, the vocabulary, and the background knowledge required, can influence comprehension success. For example, learners may find it easier to comprehend narrative texts than expository texts, or texts with clear headings and subheadings than texts with long paragraphs. Therefore, instructional strategies should aim to expose learners to various types of texts and genres and teach them how

to use text features, such as titles, pictures, graphs, and tables, to aid their comprehension. Furthermore, instructional strategies should also help learners develop their vocabulary and background knowledge, which are essential for understanding the meaning and context of the text.

In conclusion, reading comprehension is a complex and multifaceted skill that depends on many factors, such as the environment, the text, and the reader. By identifying and addressing these factors, educators can enhance reading comprehension among grade four learners and foster their lifelong learning.

***Recommendations for improving English language education in the region***

Some possible recommendations for improving English language education among Grade 4 learners in the region are:

Use instructional models and strategies that are based on evidence and best practices for teaching English language learners. Some examples of such models and strategies are as follows:

- Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is a framework for planning and delivering content and language instruction in an integrated and comprehensible way.
- Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) is a method of teaching academic content to English language learners using simplified language, visual aids, and cooperative learning.
- Bilingual Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (BCIRC) is a program that uses cooperative learning, cross-age tutoring, and explicit instruction in reading comprehension and writing skills in both English and the home language.

Provide opportunities for students to engage in content-focused writing activities to develop academic language and writing skills. Writing activities can help students practice vocabulary, grammar, and text structures that are relevant to the content area. Writing activities can also foster critical thinking and creativity. Some examples of writing activities are:

- Writing summaries, reports, or essays based on the content material.
- Writing personal responses, reflections, or opinions on the content material.
- Writing poems, stories, or songs related to the content material.

Use the home language as a resource and a bridge to English learning. The home language can help students access prior knowledge, make connections, and transfer skills from one language to another. The home language can also support students' cultural identity and self-esteem. Some examples of using the home language are:

- Previewing and reviewing content material in the home language.
- Reading storybooks in the home language.
- Allowing students to use the home language for clarification, discussion, or brainstorming.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, data presentation and analysis were done taking into consideration field results obtained through interviews and observations. Data were analysed.

Grade 4 learners experienced a lot of difficulties in reading due to their lack of fluency, failing to pronounce words/letters, learners do not know how to read or write, and they make use of wrong spellings. These factors were caused by factors such as changes in the teaching methods due to the new curriculum, lack of self-efficacy, heavy workloads, limited parents' involvement, and lack of support from MOEAC. Different

strategies need to be adopted so that there will be an improvement among learners concerning reading comprehension. The following chapter will focus on conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter focused on findings that were obtained from the research that was undertaken and these were analysed, interpreted and presented. A comprehensive and analytical understanding of the research findings was highlighted in the preceding chapter, thereby giving insights into the research problem that was under study and appropriate recommendations will be given. The conclusion is based on research findings. The main aim of the research was to investigate factors that hinder reading comprehension in English Second Language of Grade 4 learners using a case of selected primary schools in the Kavango West Region, Namibia.

### **5.2 Summary**

The English language is so crucial to learners in the junior primary phase in such a way that they can acquire reading skills that they are expected to encounter in school and that they use in everyday life. According to Elhassan et al. (2018), fluent readers are able to recognise words both automatically and accurately, instead of having to intentionally make an effort to decode most of the words they find in a text. They also suggest that fluent readers are able to read texts with expression or prosody. Despite the importance of teaching the English language, teachers seem to face serious challenges in teaching this subject, especially in reading comprehension. As a result, learners are failing because they do not have proper guidance regarding reading comprehension.

The research methodology that was used was a case study where selected primary schools in the Kavango Region were taken cases which were chosen using judgmental and convenience sampling methods to reduce travelling costs and to complete the

research within the stipulated time frame. Ten teachers were used as samples in the provision of data. All the participants were interviewed separately.

From the findings, the researcher found out that:

*1. What are the possible difficulties that Grade 4 learners at the selected schools encounter in English second language reading comprehension?*

It was discovered that learners were not fluent when it comes to reading comprehension. They did not understand the vocabulary which was extracted from the text read. The learners were failing to identify keywords and to understand some of the phrases and sentences used in the text making it difficult for them to comprehend. Some of the learners were not able to read certain words in the text and some were making use of wrong spellings when giving answers.

*2. What are the possible factors that contribute to difficulties encountered in English second language reading comprehension by Grade 4 learners?*

It was also revealed by the study that some factors contribute to reading difficulties encountered such as lack of teaching materials such as textbooks, lack of support from the administrators, poor discipline from the learners, limited involvement by parents and guardians in their children's work, lack of self-efficacy, in transfers of learners and the new curriculum.

*3. What strategies can be used to improve learners' reading comprehension in English as a second language in Grade 4?*

It was indicated that strategies such as talking and listening, use of print and books, phonological awareness, letter recognition, reading aloud, independent reading, use of small groups, and compensatory teaching, among others, should be used to improve learners' reading comprehension.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The researcher found that the factors that hinder reading comprehension were lack of English language development in learners, lack of English reading materials, insufficient word recognition strategy and lack of comprehension skills. The reason that learners failed to acquire decoding skills was that the teachers lacked the competencies to teach reading English explicitly. The teachers must possess the requisite specialisation required to teach English as a subject, and reading in particular. It was noted that in all the schools the theoretical approach in teaching reading comprehension in English was used. There should be a wider exposure of learners to a variety of reading materials for them to acquire fluency.

### **5.4 Limitations of the study**

The main limitation of this study was pertaining to generalisability. Several potential limitations affected the scope and generalisability of this study. Firstly, the findings were constrained by the specificity of the selected primary schools in the Kavango West Region, limiting the applicability to other regions or educational contexts in Namibia. Additionally, the study's reliance on Grade 4 learners did not fully capture the developmental nuances in reading comprehension skills, as factors influencing reading comprehension can vary across different grade levels. The temporal aspect of the study was also a limitation, as it captured a snapshot in time, potentially missing dynamic changes in language education practices. Lastly, the researcher's presence and interactions during data collection introduced response bias, impacting the reliability of the gathered information. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the study's outcomes and applying them to broader educational contexts.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

### **5.5.1 To teachers**

- Every classroom should have a reading corner as all the observed classrooms of the school showed no reading corners. Every corner must contain reading materials adapted for young learners like fascinating story books, colourful magazines, illustrative comic books, newspapers, jokers, cartoons, and picture books.
- More and varied teaching approaches should be applied to teach English reading comprehension such as the whole word approach, sentence approach (look and say approach), phonics approach, language experience approach, and eclectic (combined) approach.
- Compulsory in-service training programmes should be conducted in order to equip teachers without relevant skills so that they can be able to impart the knowledge to the learners.
- Teachers should be patient when teaching learners how to read so that they attend to the needs of all the learners whether high fliers or slow learners.
- Teachers should be motivated to improve their English through the English Language Proficiency Program by the MoE and UNAM.
- Teachers should encourage independent reading by learners.

### **5.5.2 To the school**

- The school should purchase adequate reading materials for the learners and if possible every learner should have his/her own reading textbook.

- Schools should convince parents through teacher-parent meetings to buy reading books for their children. This will minimise the problem of lack of materials in the development of reading habits that must start at an early age.

### **5.5.3 To the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture**

- The government should maintain the desirable teacher and learner ratio for effective manageability.
- The government should build more schools and classrooms to prevent the overcrowding of classrooms. This will help maintain the correct teacher-learner ratio to facilitate effective reading progress.
- The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should introduce a direct reading component in primary schools as part of the examination.
- Introduce reading competitions.
- Build open libraries for everyone.
- Donate English textbooks to schools.

### **5.5.4 To learners**

- Learners should practice reading in front of the class taking turns.
- Learners should not use a finger when reading a text.
- Learners should not move their lips silently when reading they should instead move their eyes over the text.

### **5.5.5 Recommendation for further studies**

The study achieved its purpose which is to investigate factors that hinder reading comprehension in English Second Language of Grade 4 learners using a case of

selected primary schools in the Kavango West Region, Namibia. However, it has therefore opened up the following avenues for further research by other scholars:

- The study was confined to a few primary schools in the Kavango West Region only. Thus, not all the regions were covered by the study. Therefore, a similar study should be conducted in other regions to determine whether the study would yield similar findings regarding the factors that hinder reading comprehension in English Second Language of Grade 4 learners so that comparisons can be made.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, M. J. (2019). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, Reading Research and Education Center.
- Alkhaldeh, A. (2019). High School Students' Challenges in English Reading Comprehension in Amman Second Directorate of Education. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 39(4), 217-227.
- Alyousef, H. (2019). Teaching reading comprehension to ESL/EFL learners. *Journal of Language and Learning*, 5(1), 63-73.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Social foundations of thoughts and actions. A social cognitive theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Bauer, M., & Gort, R. (2017). Reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners: The case of first and second year students at Yarmouk University in Jordan. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*, 8, 421-431.
- Bernstein, B. (1996). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: Theory, research, critique*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Biancarosa, G. & Snow, C. (2020). *Reading next- A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York* (2nd ed) Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.
- Boakye, N.A.N.Y. (2019). The relationship between self-efficacy of reading proficiency of first year students: An exploratory study. *Reading & Writing* 6 (1) DOI.org/10.4102/rw.v6i1.52.
- Breen, V. & Candlin, T. (2019). *English-As-A-Second Language [ESL]. Teaching and Learning. Pre-K-12 Classroom Applications for Students' Academic Achievement and Development*. Pearson Education.

- Bridge, L. B., Winograd, L. M., & Haley, M. (2018). *Best practices in literacy instruction* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). The Guilford Press.
- Brink, H. (2016). *Fundamentals of Research Methodology for Health Care Professionals*. Front Cover. Juta & Company.
- Burns, A.C. & Bush, R.F. (2021). *Tools in Research*, McGraw Hill.
- Cain, T., Oakhill, S., & Bryant, A. (2020). Investigating the causes of reading Comprehension failure: The comprehension age match design. *Reading & Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 12 (4), 31-40.
- Camilleri, L. (2019). *Teaching Language to Young Learners*. Cambridge University Press.
- Campbell, R. N. (2019). *Investigating reading Difficulties in English Second Language of Grade 3 Learner in Khomas Education Region of Namibia*: Windhoek: UNAM.
- Carter, R., & Nunan, D. (2018). *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Cambridge University Press.
- Carver, E. (2019). *Learning to read. Psychology in the classroom*. Blackwell.
- Charles, T., & Abbas, T. (2019). *Foundations of quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences*. SAGE Publications Inc.
- Childs, P. (2018). *The essential guide to English studies*. Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Comeau, B. N., Cormier, P., Grandmaison, K., & Lacroix T. (2019). *Dylexia: The pattern of difficulties* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Whurr.
- Costa, M. J., & Araujo, B. (2019). How teachers engage with assessment for learning: Lesson from the Classroom. *Research Papers in Education*, 21(2), June 2005, pp. 133-149.

- Dam, T. (2018). *The Speed Reading book. Read more, Learn more, Achieve more*. Harlow: Pearson International.
- Dawber, P., & Jordaan, P. (2018). *On the nature of reading: Reprinted from building the reading brains*. Corwin Press.
- Derchant, P. (2019). *Prevent reading difficulties in young children*. National Academy Press.
- Dickinson, D. K., & Neuman, S. B. (2019). *Handbook of Early Literacy Research*. Vol.2. The Guilford Press.
- Du Plessis, S., & Naude, E.C. (2013). The needs of teachers in pre-school centres with regard to multi-lingual learners. *South African Journal of Education*, 23,122- 129.
- Du Plooy-Cilliers, F., Davis, C., & Bezuidenhout, R. (2016). *Research Matters*. Paarl Media Paarl.
- Ekwali, E. S., & Shanlar, K. L. (2019). *Teaching Reading. Educational Practices Series-12*. New York: International Bureau of Education: UNESCO.
- Ferreiro, R., & Teberosky, Y. (2018). *Factors affecting the teaching of English reading skills in a second language of Grade 3 learners*. (Unpublished master's thesis). Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2018). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*. 16 (2), 100-130.
- Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. (2018). *Educational research methodology framework*. SAGE Publications.

- Gove, A., & Cvelich, P. (2019). *Early reading: Igniting education for all. A report by early learning community of practice.* (Revised ed.) Research Triangle Institute. Available from: <http://www.enc.ed.gov>
- Griffiths, Y. M., & Snowling, M. J. (2018). Predictors of exception word and no word reading in dyslexic children: The severity hypothesis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 94: 34-43.
- Hann, A. (2018). How early phonological development might set the stage for phonological awareness: *Phonological processing in literacy*, 97-107. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.: Hillsdale, NJ
- Harmer, K. S. (2017). Towards an Interactive-Compensatory Model of Difference in the development of reading fluency. *Read. Res. Quart.* 16, 32-71,1980. Oakland, Rochester: Department of Reading Psychology.
- Harris, P., Turbill, J., Fitzsimmons, P., & Mckenzie, B. (2018). *Reading in Primary School Years.* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Ligare Book Printers.
- Hausiku, J. (2017). *Evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation process of the inclusive education policy in two schools in the Kavango East region in Namibia.* (Unpublished master's thesis). Stellenbosch University. Stellenbosch.
- Iowes, K. M., & Target, D. B. (2019). *Engaging learners through art-making: choice based Art education in the classroom.* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) U.S.A
- Iqbal et al. (2020). Factors responsible for poor English reading comprehension at secondary level. *Communication and Linguistics Studies*, 1(1), 1-6.
- Jonker, J., & Pennik, B. (2018). *The essence of research methodology: A concise guide for Master and Phd students in Management Science.*

- Julius, L. H. (2017). The effect of relentless monitoring and grading on teaching writing: An example from two South African schools. *Namibia CPD Journal for Educators (NCPDJE)*, 2, 65-75. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11070/1872>
- Kambuga, Y. (2018). The impact of teacher-pupil ratio on teaching-learning process in primary schools: Experiences from Tanzania. *International Journal of Education and Practice*, 1(2), 14-25.
- Kamil et al. (2018). *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices. IES Practice Guide. NCEE 2008-4027*. National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.
- Keeves, J. P., & Darmawana, I. (2017). Issues in language learning. *International educational Journal*, 8(2), 16-26.
- Kidd, K. S. (2017). *Beginning English with young children*, London: MacMillan Publishers.
- Knell, E. (2018). The roles of motivation, affective attitudes and willingness to communicate among Chinese students in early English immersion programs. *International Education*, 41 (2), 5.
- Lerner, J. (2019). *Learning Disabilities: Theory, Diagnosis and Teaching Strategies*. (8<sup>th</sup> ed) Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Leu, Y. M., & Kinzer, M. J. (2017). Predictors of exception word and nonword reading in dyslexic children: The severity hypothesis. *Journal of Educational, Psychology*, 94: 34-43.
- Lyon, G. R. (2018). *Why some children have difficulties to learn to read*. (online) Retrieved 2/03/18 from <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/296>. Macmillan.
- Maree, K., & Pietersen, J. (2016). *Sampling in first steps in research*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Van Schaik

Publishers.

Maree, K. (2016). *Planning a research proposal in first steps in research*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Van Schaik Publishers.

Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. (2019). *Assessing Inclusive Education in Practice in Namibia*. Okahandja: NIED.

Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. (2019). *Improving the current curriculum and preparing for structural change*. Ministry of Education. Namibia

Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. (2020). *Improving the current curriculum and preparing for structural change*. Ministry of Education. Namibia

Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. (2021). *Improving the current curriculum and preparing for structural change*. Ministry of Education. Namibia

Mule, L. M. (2018). *Promoting voluntary reading*. In *Handbook of research on teaching the English language Arts* eds. Flood, J., Jensen, D. L. & Squire, J. Macmillan.

Mutenda, J. (2018). *Teaching reading in Grade 4 Namibian classrooms: A case study*. Rhodes University: Grahamstown

Newbay, J. (2018). *Essential skills for the qualitative researcher*. Pearson.

Nezami, S. (2020). A critical study of comprehension strategies and general problems in reading skill faced by Arab EFL learners with special reference to Najran University in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Education*,2(3), 306-316

Nunan, D. (2018). *Language Teaching Methodology*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall International.

- O'Connor, J., & Geiger, M. (2019). Challenges facing primary school's education of English second (or other) language learners in the Western Cape. *South African Journal of Education*, 29(2), 323-334.
- Oakhill, J., & Elbro, C. (2019). *Understanding and teaching reading comprehension: A handbook*. Routledge.
- Pang, S., Muaka, K., Bernhardt, T., & Kramil, J. (2019). *Teaching reading*. Belgium: International Academic of Education.
- Patanasorn, M. (2019). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, 3rd edition Spain
- Pretorius, C.A., & Machet, D.J. (2020). *Responsive teaching: An ecological approach to classroom patterns of language, culture and thought*. New York: Teachers' College Press.
- Qarqez, M., & Abo-Rashid, R. (2021). Reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners: The case of first and second year students at Yarmouk University in Jordan. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*, 8, 421-431.
- Rock, J. (2018). *Understanding the relationship between Reading Fluency and Reading Comprehension: Fluency Strategies as a Focus for Instruction*. Teachers' College Press.
- Rock, M., Gregg, M., Ellis, E., & Gable, R. (2018). REACH: A framework for differentiating classroom instruction. Preventing school failure: *Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 52(2) 31-47.
- Rockets, I. (2017). *Case study: School characteristics underperformed school in Grade 5 Standardized Achievement Tests in 2009*. Paper presented at the National

- Dissemination Workshop of the Grade 5 Standardized Achievement Tests Reports at Safari Hotel on 30 July 2010.
- Rose, D. (2005). Democratising the classroom: A literacy pedagogy for the new generation. *Journal of Education* 37, 131-167
- Rose, D. (2006). *Literacy and equality in the classroom. Future directions in literacy.* Available online: [www.edsw.usyd.edu.au/schools\\_teachers/prof\\_dev/index.shtml](http://www.edsw.usyd.edu.au/schools_teachers/prof_dev/index.shtml) (Accessed 20 February 2013).
- Rose, D., & J. Martin. (2012). *Learning to write, reading to learn: Genre, knowledge and pedagogy of the Sydney school.* Equinox Publishing.
- Savage, C, Pillay, M., & Melidona, T. (2018). Rapid processing of base derived forms of words and grade 4, 5 and 6 children's spelling: *Reading and Writing*, 12, 277-302.
- Scarborough, N. P. (2018). The nature of phonological processing and its casual role in the acquisition of reading skills. *Psychological Bulletin*, 101:192-212.
- Schunk, L., & Pajares, H. (2018). *Learning Theories: An Educational Perspective.* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pearson International.
- Siyave, T. (2017). *Teaching reading in Rukwangali in four Grade 3 Namibian classrooms: A Case study.* Unpublished master's thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown
- Skehari, T. (2008). *English Teaching Forum: Applying Reading research to the Development of an Integrated Lesson plan.* 46,1, 22-24.
- Treheane, M., & Doctorow, R. (2018). *Reading Comprehension: Strategies that Comprehensive Literacy Resource: Grade 3-6.* <https://www.hand2mind.com>.
- Vesely, T. (2018). *What great principals do differently: things that matter most.* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) McGraw Hill.
- Waddle, R. (2017). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford University Press.

- Wahyuni, D. (2018). The research design maze: understanding paradigm, cases, methods and methodologies. *Journal of Applied Management Accounting and Research*, 10, 1, 121-134.
- Weaver, K. S. (2019). *Language and thinking in school: A whole language curriculum*. R. C. Owen Publishers.
- Wimmer, H. (2019). Characteristics of developmental dyslexia in a regular writing system. *Applied Psycholinguistic*, 14 (1), 1-33.
- Wong, B. (2018). *Learning About Learning Disabilities*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Academic Press.
- Wutthisingchai, S. (2019). *A survey study of English reading comprehension problems in academic texts as perceived by mathayom 5 students in the English program at Thai Christian School*. (Unpublished MA thesis). Thammas at University: Thailand.
- Yaden, A. J. (2018). Primary school teachers' opinions of their ESL learners' language abilities: *Journal for Language Teaching*, 42(2), 64-76.
- Ziegler, J. C., & Goswami, U. (2018). Reading acquisition, developmental dyslexia, and skilled, and skilled reading across languages: A psycholinguistic grain size theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 131(1), 3-29.

## APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



**Ethical Clearance Reference Number: WKC 0029**

**Date: 15 August 2023**

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Decentralized Ethics Committee (DEC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the **School of Education (Windhoek & Khomasdal Campuses) Decentralized Ethics Committee.**

**Title of Project:** Investigating factors that hinder reading comprehension in English second language of Grade 4 learners: a case of selected primary schools in the Kavango West Region, Namibia.

**Researcher:** Alpheus Ngoma Nairenge

**Student number:** 9601538

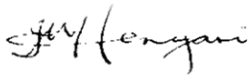
Take note of the following:

1. Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the ethics committee. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
2. Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on the ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the ethics committee
3. The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the ethics committee (through the Chairperson) at the end of the Project or as may be

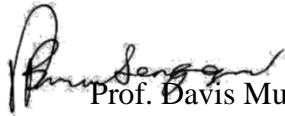
requested by the ethics committee

4. The ethics committee retains the right to:
  - i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
  - ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

The ethics committee wishes you the best in your research.



Dr. Job U. Hengari (Chairperson, Windhoek & Khomasdal Campuses  
Decentralized Ethics Committee)



Prof. Davis Mumbengegwi  
(Head, Multidisciplinary Research)

## APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



**KAVANGO WEST REGIONAL COUNCIL  
DIRECTORATE EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE**

Tel No: (066) 274200  
Email: kavangowesteac@yahoo.com  
Enquiries: Leena N. Muhoka  
Ref: 26/ 1 / 16

Private Bag 6193, Nkurenkuru  
Namibia


22 June 2023

Mr. Alfeus Ngoma Nairenge

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY KATJINAKATJI CIRCUIT,  
KAVANGO WEST**

1. The Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture Kavango West wishes to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated 21 June 2023, seeking for permission to conduct an academic research for your Master of Education on the topic: **Factors that hinder reading comprehension in English Second Language of grade 4 learners: A case study of selected primary schools in Katjindakatji Circuit, Kavango West region.**
2. Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct your research provided you seek for further clearance from the Circuit Inspector of Education where you wish to conduct your research to ensure that:
  - Permission is sought from the school Principals
  - Teaching and learning is not interrupted which is normally from 07h00- 14h00
  - Participation is voluntary
3. Furthermore, you are kindly requested to share your research findings with the Directorate of Education Kavango West after completion of your study. You may contact the Deputy Director for Programme and Quality Assurance (PQA) for submission of a summary of your research findings.
4. We wish you all the best in conducting your research.

Yours Sincerely,

  
PONTIANUS V. MUSORE  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE  
KAVANGO WEST



  
DATE

**CC: Inspector of Education: Katjindakatji Circuit  
School Principals: for Primary schools in Katjindakatji Circuit**

All official correspondences must be addressed to the office of the Chief Regional Officer

**APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR: TEACHERS,  
TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR GRADE 4**

Title of the research project: **Investigating factors that hinder reading comprehension in English second language of grade 4 learners: A case study of selected schools in Kavango West region, Namibia**

Name of principal investigator: Alpheus Ngoma Nairenge

Name of organisation: University of Namibia

Student number: 9601538

Name of project and version: Master of Education

Address: P O BOX 316 RUNDU

Contact number: 081 294 5112 / 081 450 7171

You are invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain in detail about the project. It is very important that you are fully satisfied and that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Remember that your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. If there is anything which you are unhappy or uncertain about regarding the way I am going about the research, please do tell me, and we can work around it. Please know also that if at any time you wish to withdraw from the research project that is entirely your prerogative. This study has been approved by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee and the Regional Director of Education of Kavango West and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki, South Africa guidelines for good clinical practice and Namibia National Ethics.

## **Guidelines**

### **Purpose of the study**

The study is about **Investigating Factors that hinder reading comprehension in English second language of grade 4 learners: A case study of selected schools in Kavango West Region, Namibia.**

### **Participation selection:**

You are being invited to take part in this study research, because I feel that your experience as a teacher, teaching English second language to Grade 4 can contribute much to this research. You have been invited because the study will not be successful without your contribution.

*What will be your responsibilities?*

Your responsibility in this study is to answer questions which you understand and if there are questions which are not clear to you, feel free to ask the researcher to clarify. I, therefore, request your permission to participate in the interview sessions to be done.

### **Type of research intervention**

I will first interview you regarding the teaching of reading comprehension for Grade 4. There will be also an analysis of samples of some of the assessment activities you design for your learners such as reading materials, reading comprehension tests, homework, class work and examinations and see if we find alternative ways of teaching reading comprehension in Namibian schools. All these will be done at a time of your convenience such that the whole process does not temper with your official duties/ or classes.

### **Benefits**

There are no direct benefits to participating in this study, but there may be secondary benefits that arise from the research results and recommendations.

**Risk**

There is no foreseeable risk in participating in this study.

**Reimbursements**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and it will not cost you money in any manner. As such, you will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research project.

**Declaration by participant**

I agree to take part in this study. [ ]

I do NOT agree to take part in this study. [ ]

I declare that:

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I had an opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I had been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study. I also agree that the interview should be recorded. I also agree to be observed.

I provide consent for the viewing of documents.

Signed at .....

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
DD/MM/YY

**Declaration by investigator**

I ..... declare that: I explained the information in this document to ..... I encourage him or her to ask questions and take adequate time to answer them. I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above.

Signed at (place) ..... On (Date) .....

## **APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE TEACHERS**

Dear Sir/Madam

I am Alpheus Ngoma Nairenge (9601538) a Masters student at the University of Namibia. I am undertaking a study for the degree of Master Degree in Education (Curriculum, Instructional and Assessment Studies). I am currently conducting research titled: *Investigating factors that hinder reading comprehension in English second language of grade 4 learners: A case study of selected Primary schools in Kavango West Region, Namibia*. As part of the fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Master Degree in Education by the University of Namibia.

I am kindly asking for your assistance in participating in the research. All the data collected in this study will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will solely be used for academic purposes. Your name is not included on the forms you will simply be referred to as respondent number 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10. No one else except my supervisor Dr. Lukas Julius and co-supervisor Ms. Tertisia Ndinela Nghipondoka and I will have access to your interview guides. Hard copies will be kept in a personal cabinet locked with a key. Any assistance you will offer is highly appreciated.

Thank you

Alpheus Ngoma Nairenge (9601538)

Contact numbers 081 294 5112 / 081 450 7171

Physical Address: Erf 611 NHE Rundu

## **SECTION A**

### **Demographic and Respondent profile**

**Please tick in the appropriate boxes**

Gender: Male [ ]                      Female [ ]

Age:

Less than 25

26-30

31-34

35-39

40-44

45-49

50-54

55-59

What is your highest level of educational qualification?

Secondary Education

Certificate

Diploma level

Bachelor Degree

Master Degree

Others(specify)

How long have you been teaching English second language at Senior Primary in the Kavango West Region?

Less than 3 years

4-6 years

7-9 years

10-12 years

13-15 years

16-18 years

19-21 years

Which title best describes your post?

Subject teacher

HOD

Principal

Class size (learner's population)

Below 35

36-40

41-45

Over 46

**SECTION B**

1. Explain the methods that you use for teaching reading comprehension skills in your Grade 4 class.

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

2. Can you comment on the reading ability of the Grade 4 learners on comprehension?

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

3. What kind of difficulties do learners in Grade 4 experience in reading comprehension?

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



4. How do you help learners in dealing with reading difficulties?

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





**APPENDIX E: LEARNERS PERFORMANCE IN GRADE 4**

<p><b>Marks: 30</b>  <b>Grade: 4</b>  <b>Time: 1h30</b></p> <p><b>Name: :</b>  <b>School:</b></p>	<p><b>English as a Second Language</b></p> <p><b>Learner Question Paper</b></p> <p><b>Paper 1</b></p> <p><b>May/ June Examination 2023</b></p>								
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">  <div style="text-align: center;"> <math display="block">\frac{8}{30}</math> </div>  </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Republic of Namibia</b>  <b>Kavango West Regional Council</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture</b></p>									
<p><b>Instructions to the candidate:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates answer on the Question paper in the spaces provided.</li> <li>• Write your name and surname on the space provided at the top of this page.</li> <li>• Write in dark blue or black pen.</li> <li>• Do not use correction fluid.</li> <li>• Answer all questions</li> <li>• The number of marks are given in brackets <b>[ ]</b> at the end of each question or part question.</li> </ul>									
<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"><b>For Examiner's Use Only</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><b>Part 1</b></td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><b>Part 2</b></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><b>Total</b></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		<b>For Examiner's Use Only</b>		<b>Part 1</b>		<b>Part 2</b>		<b>Total</b>	
<b>For Examiner's Use Only</b>									
<b>Part 1</b>									
<b>Part 2</b>									
<b>Total</b>									
<p>7 Pages including the Cover Page</p>									

**PART 1: Reading Skills and Grammar**

**TASK 1:**

Instructions: Read the story "A cat called Mouse" and answer the question that follow.

**A cat called Mouse**

Helena has a cat called Mouse. Mouse is a very fat cat. Mouse does not like to play or cuddle. She just likes to eat and sleep. Sometimes, Mouse likes to nap on the couch and sometimes she likes to nap under the piano.

Mouse is not a very brave cat. She is frightened of everything. She is scared of people, cars, water and thunder. She is even afraid of other cats.

One day, Mouse was having her afternoon nap on the couch when something woke her up. She heard the patter of tiny feet. Lazily, Mouse opened one eye. Then she meowed in fright and jumped up onto the back of the couch. A little rat was creeping across the room.

The rat froze and looked at Mouse. It had not seen Mouse sleeping on the couch, but now it knew that it was in danger. Quickly, the rat ran away. Then Mouse went back to sleep.

1. Who is the owner of the cat?

Mouse \_\_\_\_\_ (1)

2. Mention one thing that mouse does not like to do.

likes to nap on the couch and sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ (1)

3. Find the word with the *opposite meaning* of the word "thin" from paragraph 1.

She likes to nap under the piano \_\_\_\_\_ (1)

4. Change the underlined word into present tense.

She heard the patter of tiny feet.

not like to play or \_\_\_\_\_ (1)  
cuddle

5. Write a sentence using the word "little"

Quickly \_\_\_\_\_ (1)

**TOTAL: 5 MARKS**