Role of Teacher-Learner Interactions in Enhancing Reading Comprehension Skills among English First Additional Language Learners

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ABSTRACT:
Learners receive reading comprehension strategies effectively in an environment where they feel safe and they are free express themselves without fear. The purpose of this study was to explore the teacher-learner interactions during English First Additional Language reading comprehension lessons. The participants in the study included Six (6) English First Additional language teachers and two hundred and twenty-three (223) English First Additional Language learners at 3 selected schools. Data was collected through non-participant observation and inductive data analysis method was used to analyse data. The study found that teacher-learner interactions build vocabulary, develops comprehension strategies, increase engagement and motivation and provide formative feedback during authentic meaning-making, enabling corrective instruction. The study also found that there are limited teacher-learner interactions during EFAL reading comprehension lessons as not all the learners in the classrooms are engaged in the lessons. The study recommends that teachers should create a classroom atmosphere where learners feel safe to express opinions, ask questions, and make mistakes and encourage peer interaction and group reading to enhance cooperative learning and design reading comprehension activities that explicitly promote dialogue, critical thinking, and cooperative learning. In addition, the study recommends that future research should study how digital platforms and interactive reading apps can enhance teacher-learner engagement in EFAL classrooms..

Keywords: Teacher-learner interactions, English First Additional Language, critical thinking, interactive reading, collaboration.

1. Introduction

Teacher-learner interaction is the engagement, collaboration and communication that takes place between teachers and learners and teaches learners openness, transparency and confidence which also shapes their values and attitudes (Yang, Gao and Shen, 2024). This suggests that teacher-learner interaction is the process of imparting knowledge, acquiring skills and the provision of feedback on the learners' work. Furthermore, teacher-learner interaction regarded as an ongoing evaluation of learners' progress through engagements, which can be done online or during physical classroom learning

(Sun, Sun, Sha, Gu, Hou, Zhu and Fang, 2022). This indicates that learners must be free to interact with their teachers and other learners in the classroom to effectively learn reading comprehension skills. In other words, effective teaching and learning of reading comprehension skills requires efficient interaction between teachers and learners during lessons. For this purpose, learners benefit greatly on the teaching strategies used by teachers to impart knowledge on how well to acquire effective reading comprehension skills when they are free to communicate and interact with their teachers during English First Additional Language reading comprehension lessons (Nguyen, 2022; Elston, Tiba and Condy, 2022; Mbambo-Marimirofa, Phillips and Condy, 2023; Mogano and Motlhaka, 2023). Naturally, learners who have good relationships with their teachers are free to communicate their ideas and engage in discussions, which makes it easier for teachers to learn and build on the learners' strengths and weaknesses (Liu, Du and Lu, 2023).

Literature indicates that teaching of reading comprehension skills requires explicit instruction and teachers' support through teacher-learner interactions during reading comprehension lessons (Mpofu and Mavambe, 2023). Therefore, it is important that teachers create a safe classroom environment where learners will be free to participate in discussions, ask questions and actively interact with their teachers using the English First Additional language without fear (Siegel-Stechler, 2023). Lin, Kraatz, Ha, Hsieh, Glassman, Nagpal, Sallade and Shin (2022) indicate that learners who are free to communicate in small group classroom discussions are more confident and less aggressive than their peers who only participate in read aloud sessions without discussions. This shows that for learners to learn reading comprehension skills effectively, there must be efficient interactions between the teachers as well as learners. Studies indicate that learning the reading comprehension skills requires practice, explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies, through the usage of verbal and nonverbal communication. Considering this, teachers should employ teaching strategies that create opportunities to ask questions, promote dialogues and discussions which encourage open communication and interactions between learners and teachers in the classrooms. Therefore, this study investigates the role of teacher-learner interactions in enhancing reading comprehension skills among English First Additional Language learners. The research objectives guiding this study were as follows:

- Determine teaching strategies teachers use to address Grade 11 EFAL learners' reading comprehension challenges.
- Determine the learning and teaching support materials that teachers use address the reading comprehension challenges that Grade 11 EFAL learners experience.
- Determine the remedial reading activities teachers offer to Grade 11 EFAL learners to explore role of teacher-learner Interactions in enhancing reading comprehension skills among English First Additional Language learners.

Many studies agree that efficient usage of reading comprehension strategies helps to empower learners with reading comprehension skills (Akparjonovna, 2024: Fadila, Dalimunthe and Siagian, 2024). On the same light, Kim, Burkhauser, Mesite, Asher, Relyea, Fitzgerald and Elmore (2021) assert that the effectiveness of the reading comprehension strategies relies greatly on the engagement of the learners in the classroom. Ginting (2021) further concludes that learners who are active in the classroom find it easier to engage with teachers and other learners in the classroom, which makes it simpler for them to receive help when needed and as a result their reading comprehension levels show improvement. With that in mind, the researchers has observed that English First Additional Language learners still find it hard to read texts with understanding because the reading comprehension strategies used in the classrooms are not effectively hence, there is limited teacher-learner interactions during reading

comprehension lessons. Consequently, limited teacher-learner interactions during reading comprehension lessons affect learners' understanding of texts because they lack clarification and feedback from teachers, making it difficult for them to identify and address their weaknesses. Despite the theoretical and empirical support for reading comprehension strategies, the researchers note that EFAL learners still struggle to read with understanding because these strategies are not being implemented effectively, primarily due to limited teacher-learner interactions.

It is important that teachers and learners have an open interaction during EFAL reading comprehension lessons for improved understanding and engagement. According to Sabrina (2022), teacher-learner interactions help to build trust, foster good communication and help teachers to understand the learners' levels of understanding, which makes it easier to address any misconceptions at a given time. Again, Mpofu and Mavambe (2023) assert that teacher-learner interactions during reading comprehension lessons help to build learners' comprehension skills through guided practice. Similarly, Gkonou (2021) claims that learners who have positive relationships with their teachers show high levels of engagement and have a positive attitude towards academic activities, as a result, through guidance and support from teachers their reading comprehension improve. In any case, Ikhsan (2024) found that teachers' use of strategies such as teacher-talk in the classroom helps to encourage communication between teachers and learners as the learners respond to the questions and dialogue initiated by the teachers. In this situation, scaffolding through teacher's rapport is vital to effectively help EFAL learners to use online teaching platforms. Accordingly, this proves without reservation that teacher-learners interaction is needed in order to effectively teach reading comprehension skills to EFAL learners.

2. Methodology

Design

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology as the researchers were interested to learn about the lived experiences of the participants in investigating the role of teacher-learner interactions in enhancing reading comprehension skills among English First Additional Language learners (Silverio, Sheen, Bramante, Knighting, Koops, Montgomery, November, Soulsby, Stevenson, Watkins and Easter, 2022). Case study research design was used to get an in-depth exploration of the interactions between English First Additional Language learners and teachers during reading comprehension lessons (Mpuangnan, Mngomezulu and Govender, 2024).

Participants/Sample

The study purposively selected six (6) English First Additional Language teachers and two hundred and twenty-three (223) Grade 11 English First Additional Language learners at three (3) selected schools.

Instruments and Procedure

The study used non-participant observation where the researchers observed six Grade 11 English First Additional Language lessons at three selected schools to examine how teacher-learner interactions contribute to the development of reading comprehension skills among EFAL learners during an English reading lesson. The non-participant observation focused on the nature and quality of teacher questioning during reading activities, learner engagement and participation, use of feedback, scaffolding, and prompts by the teacher, peer interactions and collaborative discussion and classroom atmosphere and support for meaning making. The researcher observed classroom teaching and learning activities without actively participating in them. An observation checklist and field notes were used to record instances of translanguaging, teacher–learner interactions, and language use patterns. Observations were conducted over a four-week period, and the data collected were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and practices

Data Analysis: This study used inductive data analysis method to analyse non-participant observation data on the role of teacher–learner interactions in enhancing reading comprehension skills among English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners. The researchers transcribed handwritten notes, labelled each observation session and developed a coding framework to identify patterns or themes (e.g., teacher-student interaction, classroom management, student engagement) that emerged from the data rather than imposing predefined categories.

3. Results

The study investigated the role of teacher-learner interactions in enhancing reading comprehension skills among English First Additional Language learners. An observation schedule was used to observe reading comprehension lessons of 6 EFAL teachers on reading comprehension passage, wherein the teachers were teaching a comprehension passage titled 'IT IS IN THE BAG' to explore the role of teacher-learner interactions in enhancing reading comprehension skills among English First Additional Language learners. The following themes emerged from the analysis of observation data:

Reading strategies used by teachers

This theme seeks to determine the teaching strategies that teachers use to address the issue of learners being unable to respond to comprehension passage questions, to achieve the following study objective: 'Determine teaching strategies teachers use to address the issue of learners being unable to respond to reading comprehension passages. The following reading strategies used by teachers emerged after the analysis of observation data:

Pre-reading strategies

This is a reading strategy used to activate the readers' background knowledge as well as to prepare them for reading of the text/passage. Some of the components of pre-reading activities include, skimming, predicting and introducing key vocabulary (Venketsamy and Sibanda, 2021). This is how the teachers applied the pre-reading activities in their classrooms:

> *Teacher 1 encouraged the learners to skim and scan the passage and look for unfamiliar words such as enormous, 1,5 tons of carbon emissions, annually, deforestation etc. She further asked the learners to look up the unfamiliar words in their dictionaries then write the words together with their meanings in their dairies.*
>
> *Teacher 2 read the title to the learners and asked the learners what they think the passage will be about. Learner 3, school A answered by saying 'I think the passage will be about a bag that has money in it'. Learner 2, school A answered by saying 'I think the passage will be about a bag that is used to carry goods'.*
>
> *Teacher 5 encouraged learners to look at the title and make predictions of what the passage will be about. Learner 5, school C, answered by saying 'I think the passage will be about a bag that is used to hide things'. The teacher further requested the learners to write down their predictions in their scrap books, then they will revisit their predictions on the actual reading of the passage.*

During reading strategies

This is the reading strategy where readers get deeper into reading the passage/text, this is where the predictions are proven correct or incorrect and more information about the passage is being received through engaged reading (Fisher, Frey and Hattie, 2020). This is how the teachers applied the reading strategies during reading compression lessons:

> *Teacher 1 asked learners to write down unfamiliar words as they are reading, these words are looked up in the dictionaries. The teacher moved around the class to check if all the learners are reading. The teacher further encourages learners to write down brief notes as they read the text.*
>
> *Teacher 2 encouraged the learners to write down unfamiliar words as they are reading. The teacher moves around the class to check if the learners are reading or not. The teacher also*

encouraged learners to read the passage twice if they did not understand the meaning of it.

Teacher 5 instructed one learner to come and read in front of the class while the others are reading the handouts of the passage. She further asked the learners if their predictions match with what the text is about. Learner 5, school C answered by saying 'what I predicted is not the same as what is written in the passage.

Post reading strategies

This is a reading activity where the readers reflect on what they have read and to check their levels of understanding the material, the information received from the texts can also be transferred or used in another context (Cromley, 2023). This is how the teachers applied the post reading activities in their classrooms:

Teacher 1 asked learners to tell her what the passage was about, one learner responded by saying 'the passage was about a Wonderbag that is used to make cooking fun and food to cook faster

Teacher 3 asked if the 'it is in the bag' a suitable title for the passage, and why do they think so' A learner raised their hand to answer the question by saying 'it is a suitable title as the passage talks about a bag that can perform miracles', the teacher further instructed learners to look up the unfamiliar words in their dictionaries. Learners identified words such as enormous, crafts, innovative etc.

Teacher 6 asked learners to discuss the themes found in it the passage and report back to the class, in their groups.

Learner engagement

This theme seeks to determine how teachers effectively involve learners in the reading comprehension lessons in order to overcome the challenge of learners not being able to read for comprehension. This is how teachers encouraged effective participation in their reading comprehension lessons:

Teacher 3 asked if the 'IT IS IN THE BAG' a suitable title for the passage, and why do they think so' A learner raised their hand to answer the question by saying 'it is a suitable title as the passage talks about a bag that can perform miracles', the teacher further instructed learners to look up the unfamiliar words in their dictionaries. Learners identified words such as enormous, crafts, innovative etc.

Teacher 4 requested learners to read on their own.

Teacher 5, asked one learner to come to the front and read the passage while the others were also reading on their own.

Remedial activities

This theme seeks to determine the kind of remedial activities teachers offer to grade 11 EFAL learners in order to explore the effect of instruction on Grade 11 English First Additional Learners' reading comprehension. This is how the teachers offer remedial activities to learners.

Teacher 1 did not have any remedial activities for struggling learners, instead learners are encouraged to go and read more at home using magazines and newspaper articles.

Teacher 2 offered extra lesson to struggling learners, wherein she made them read the passage one after the other, from there they are encouraged to underline unfamiliar words from the text, these are words such as 'daunting, award-winning, revolutionary, conventional etc, the teacher then instructed the learners to look up the unfamiliar words in the dictionary and write the definitions down then go back to re-read the passage again.

Teacher 4 did not have any remedial activities in place for learners.

Learning and Teaching Support Materials

This theme seeks to determine the learning and teaching support materials that teachers use to overcome the reading comprehension challenged that Grade 11 EFAL learners experience.

Teacher 2 used comprehension passage handouts to teach the lesson, learners had their own dictionaries in place to check the words are not

familiar to them, these are words such as vulnerable, emissions, hesitate etc.

Teacher 5 used the comprehension passage handouts to teach reading, all the learners had their own copies of the comprehension passages, there are no other materials that were used other than the handouts.

Teacher 6 used the comprehension passage handout to teach passage; all learners had a copy of the comprehension passage.

4. Discussion

The study investigated the role of teacher-learner interactions in enhancing reading comprehension skills among English First Additional Language learners. An observation schedule was used to observe reading comprehension lessons of 6 EFAL teachers on reading comprehension passage, wherein the teachers were teaching a comprehension passage titled 'IT IS IN THE BAG' to explore the role of teacher-learner interactions in enhancing reading comprehension skills among English First Additional Language learners. The following themes emerged from the analysis and interpretation of observation data:

Reading strategies used by teachers

This theme seeks to determine the teaching strategies that teachers use to address the issue of learners being unable to respond to comprehension passage questions, to achieve the following study objective: 'Determine teaching strategies teachers use to address the issue of learners being unable to respond to reading comprehension passages. The following reading strategies used by teachers emerged after the analysis of observation data:

Pre-reading strategies

This is a reading strategy used to activate the readers' background knowledge as well as to prepare them for reading of the text/passage. Some of the components of pre-reading activities include, skimming, predicting and introducing key vocabulary (Venketsamy and Sibanda, 2021). This is how the teachers applied the pre-reading activities in their classrooms:

Teacher 1 encouraged the learners to skim and scan the passage and look for unfamiliar words such as enormous, 1,5 tons of carbon emissions, annually, deforestation etc. She further asked the learners to look up the unfamiliar words in their dictionaries then write the words together with their meanings in their dairies.

Teacher 2 read the title to the learners and asked the learners what they think the passage will be about. Learner 3, school A answered by saying 'I think the passage will be about a bag that has money in it'. Learner 2, school A answered by saying 'I think the passage will be about a bag that is used to carry goods'.

Teacher 5 encouraged learners to look at the title and make predictions of what the passage will be about. Learner 5, school C, answered by saying 'I think the passage will be about a bag that is used to hide things'. The teacher further requested the learners to write down their predictions in their scrap books, then they will revisit their predictions on the actual reading of the passage.

The data presented above show that teachers use the pre-reading strategy infused with the predicting and skimming components of teaching reading comprehension to activate the learners' background knowledge. The researchers observed that the learners responses to the questions indicated that they read the title of the passage and that arouse their curiosity. This finding is in line with the findings of Anaktototy and Huwae (2020) who claim that the pre-reading activities help learners to be more engaged and interested in reading the texts as it encourages them to seek to know more about the texts and to check if their predictions are true or not. Concurrently, Eren-Zaffar (2020) found that employing the pre-reading activities when teaching reading comprehension to learners significantly increases the reading comprehension of learners. With that been said, Febrianti, Arifin and Rohbiah (2022) confirm that some learners may not be able to use the predicting strategies, due to lack of vocabulary, they also acclaim that teachers must apply the pre-teaching vocabulary to increase the learners' vocabulary as that will

enable them to be on the same levels as the other learners in the class. Additionally, Cervetti and Wright (2020) show that teachers can help to stimulate learners' background knowledge by introducing key vocabulary before the actual reading of a text, which enables the learners to connect the text to what they already know. Similarly, Mutaliani, Omulando and Barasa (2023) indicate that pre-reading activities involve engagements and discussions in their nature which allow learners to grasp vocabulary words from one another prior to the actual reading which helps them to connect easily with the text, as a result the learners' background knowledge will be activated. This indicates without reservations, the importance of teachers to use the pre-reading strategies when teaching reading comprehension to learners as this helps to active learners' prior knowledge as this activation is needed to improve learners' reading comprehension.

During reading strategies

This is the reading strategy where readers get deeper into reading the passage/text, this is where the predictions are proven correct or incorrect and more information about the passage is being received through engaged reading (Fisher, Frey and Hattie, 2020). This is how the teachers applied the reading strategies during reading compression lessons:

> *Teacher 1 asked learners to write down unfamiliar words as they are reading, these words are looked up in the dictionaries. The teacher moved around the class to check if all the learners are reading. The teacher further encourages learners to write down brief notes as they read the text.*
>
> *Teacher 2 encouraged the learners to write down unfamiliar words as they are reading. The teacher moves around the class to check if the learners are reading or not. The teacher also encouraged learners to read the passage twice if they did not understand the meaning of it.*
>
> *Teacher 5 instructed one learner to come and read in front of the class while the others are reading the handouts of the passage. She further asked the learners if their predictions match with what the text is about. Learner 5, school C answered by saying 'what I predicted is not the same as what is written in the passage.*

The data presented above show that during the reading activity, the teachers encourage learners to underline the unfamiliar words found in the passage as they engage with the material. The teachers further move around the class to check if the learners are all reading. This helps learners to understand the text better as they visualize the texts and make the materials relatable as they combine the clues given in the passage to their own background knowledge. This finding is supported by the findings of Gustanti and Ayu (2021) who found that there is a positive correlation between the usage of the during reading strategies and improved English reading proficiency, this further indicates that it is important for readers to be actively involved during the actual reading of the passage. Equally, Par (2020) states that there is a positive relationship between the usage of reading strategies such as during reading and the learners' reading achievement. Teacher 2, above encouraged learners to read the passage again after the first reading, this helps the learners to make sense out of the written symbols which makes it easier to understand the passage. This finding is supported by the findings of Nasir, Syafitri and Safitri (2022) who claim that learners are most likely to understand the text better if there is a repetition of the during reading activity, this means that learners must re-read the passage for better understanding of it. The above data further reveal that the teachers encourage the learners to look up the unfamiliar words in the dictionaries which enables them to understand the texts better and also help to improve their vocabulary (Allen, 2023). Similarly, Ambarwati and Mandasari (2020) believe that the usage of dictionaries during the reading phase can help learners to improve pronunciation and develop strong vocabulary. In summary, this theme has proven that learners, with the help of the EFAL Grade 11 teachers partake in the during reading activities where they engage in the actual reading

of the passage and make meaning out of the written symbols, as a result the learners' reading and understanding of the texts significantly improves.

Post reading strategies

This is a reading activity where the readers reflect on what they have read and to check their levels of understanding the material, the information received from the texts can also be transferred or used in another context (Cromley, 2023). This is how the teachers applied the post reading activities in their classrooms:

> *Teacher 1 asked learners to tell her what the passage was about, one learner responded by saying 'the passage was about a Wonderbag that is used to make cooking fun and food to cook faster*
>
> *Teacher 3 asked if the 'it is in the bag' a suitable title for the passage, and why do they think so' A learner raised their hand to answer the question by saying 'it is a suitable title as the passage talks about a bag that can perform miracles', the teacher further instructed learners to look up the unfamiliar words in their dictionaries. Learners identified words such as enormous, crafts, innovative etc.*
>
> *Teacher 6 asked learners to discuss the themes found in it the passage and report back to the class, in their groups.*

The data presented above indicate that teachers effectively apply the post reading activities in their classrooms, for instance, Teacher 3 used questioning to check the learners' levels of understanding of the passage that was read. This helps the teachers and the learners to check their levels of understanding the passage, which effectively helps them to know if they did understand the passage or not which makes it easier to know the gaps that they have in order to fill those gaps with relevant information, this can be achieved by re-reading the passage. This finding is in line with the findings of Fisher and Frey (2021) who show the importance of using summarizing, questioning and group discussions as some of the components of post reading stage. These reading strategies help the learners to know how well they understand what they have read, which enables them to know if there is a need to go back and re-read the passage for better understanding of it (Allen, 2023). In agreement, Gustanti and Ayu (2021) argue that the post reading stage is where the learners should be guided for the effective usage of the information received from the text. Moreover, this theme indicate that teachers use the post reading strategies to check learners' level of understanding the material, this assists to identify the levels of the learners' understanding. In summary, the data presented above shows that most teachers adhere to the pre-reading, during and post reading activities. The use of these strategies helps learners to understand the reading comprehension passage better.

Learner engagement

Studies show that for learners to effectively learn and understand what is being taught, they must be actively involved in the teaching and learning process (Munna and Kalam, 2021; Utami, Aminatun and Fatriana, 2020). In order for Grade 11 EFAL learners to learn and develop reading comprehension skills, they must be actively involved in the reading comprehension lessons where their active participation is encouraged to ensure that they all receive the material as intended (Mahmudah and Rasyid, 2022; Motlhaka, 2022). This can be successfully achieved as teachers use varied teaching methods which cater for the diverse learning needs of the learners, these methods may include questions and answers, group discussions and whole class discussions. This theme seeks to determine how teachers effectively involve learners in the reading comprehension lessons in order to overcome the challenge of learners not being able to read for comprehension. This is how teachers encouraged effective participation in their reading comprehension lessons:

> *Teacher 3 asked if the 'IT IS IN THE BAG' a suitable title for the passage, and why do they think so' A learner raised their hand to answer the question by saying 'it is a suitable title as the passage talks about a bag that can perform*

miracles', the teacher further instructed learners to look up the unfamiliar words in their dictionaries. Learners identified words such as enormous, crafts, innovative etc.

Teacher 4 requested learners to read on their own.

Teacher 5, asked one learner to come to the front and read the passage while the others were also reading on their own.

The data presented above indicates that teachers seldomly engage the learners in the reading comprehension lessons, teacher 5, above asked one learner to read the passage in front of the class while the others are reading on their own while the teacher listens to the individual learner, this indicates that not all the learners in the class are engaged in the lesson as some might not be reading, which implies that other learners may not be able to understand the texts as they are not actively involved in the lesson. This suggests that the above reading comprehension lessons only cater for the gifted learners while the struggling learners are left behind (Trail, 2022). This finding is in line with the findings of Schnitzler, Holzberger and Seidel (2021) who argues that only learners who are highly gifted show high levels of classroom engagement and achievement, which entails that the less gifted learners might still find it difficult to understand the reading comprehension passage as they are seldomly involved in the lesson. In agreement, Sedláček and Šeďova (2020) confirm that highly apprehensive learners perform poorly in a classroom where active participation/engagement is not encouraged. Similarly, Barber and Klauda (2020) suggest that teachers and policy makers must learn the skill of active engagement, as this will assist them to actively apply/engage learners in the reading comprehension classrooms as well as to transfer the skill to the learners. Equally, Zimmerman (2023) confirms that struggling learners find it hard to grasp the reading for understanding skill in a class where there is no learner engagement. Therefore, it is worth noting that being in a class where the lessons only cater for the learning needs of gifted learners make it difficult for children to identify their own strengths and flaws which prevents them from moving further with their education (Ntamu and Oyo-Ita, 2022). It is also significant to point out that the development of learners reading skills is dependent on how well they are taught which makes it important to involve learners in the reading comprehension lessons (Duke, Pearson and Ward, 2021). Thus, the above data has highlighted that teachers do not engage learners in the reading comprehension lessons as only the gifted learners are able to grasp the intended outcomes and the less gifted learners are left behind.

Remedial activities

Literature indicates the need for teachers to engage learners in remedial activities, where learners are given individualized attention with the intention to offer skills that will enable them to overcome the reading comprehension challenges that learners experience (Kim, Burkhauser, Mesite, Asher, Relyea, Fitzgerald and Elmore, 2021). For teachers to be able to effectively assist learners to overcome the reading comprehension challenges they must identify the gaps that learners have and close those gaps with relevant information through remedial activities, this will assist to offer specialized comprehension support tailored to the specific needs of the learners (Acita, Egtob, Cabus, Luceñara, Luceñara and Saro, 2022). This theme seeks to determine the kind of remedial activities teachers offer to grade 11 EFAL learners in order to explore the effect of instruction on Grade 11 English First Additional Learners' reading comprehension. This is how the teachers offer remedial activities to learners.

Teacher 1 did not have any remedial activities for struggling learners, instead learners are encouraged to go and read more at home using magazines and newspaper articles.

Teacher 2 offered extra lesson to struggling learners, wherein she made them read the passage one after the other, from there they are encouraged to underline unfamiliar words from the text, these are words such as 'daunting, award-winning, revolutionary, conventional etc,

the teacher then instructed the learners to look up the unfamiliar words in the dictionary and write the definitions down then go back to re-read the passage again.

Teacher 4 did not have any remedial activities in place for learners.

The data presented above indicates that most teachers do not have remedial activities in place to assist learners to overcome the reading comprehension challenges that they experience. Teacher 1 did not have any remedial activities in place even though they encouraged learners to read more at home using magazines and newspaper articles, this indicates that the learners who are struggling are not offered any support. This implies that these learners are left with their frustrations and the reading challenges lingers. This finding corroborates the findings of Martinez-Lincoln, Barnes and Clemens (2021) who maintain that lack of remedial activities hinders the chances for struggling learners to better their reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, there is a clear consensus that lack of remedial activities, hinders learners' chances to improve their reading comprehension skills. Equally, Jafaruddin, Iqbal and Rahmi (2021) inform that learners feel left out and neglected when there are no majors in place to cater for their learning needs. In light of the above, the findings indicate that teachers do not have remedial activities in place to assist struggling learners, which further proves that the struggling learners are left on their own with their reading comprehension challenges not addressed. However, Martins and Capellini (2021) assert that a large number of learners benefit on remedial education, especially the ones who are not adequately prepared for their grades. This is in line with the findings of Gedik and Akyol (2022) who found that learners who are engaged in reading comprehension remedial activities, develop the desire and motivation to read and their reading comprehension levels improve while they gain independence in reading. In a different point of view, Zientek, Lane, Sechelski and Shupp (2022) argue that there is no strong evidence that indicate poor performance of learners if they are not engaged in remedial activities.

Learning and Teaching Support Materials

According to Abdulrahaman, Faruk, Oloyede, Surajudeen-Bakinde, Olawoyin, Mejabi, Imam-Fulani, Fahm and Azeez (2020), for teaching and learning of reading comprehension skills to take place effectively, teachers and learners must be equipped with materials such as books, articles and multimedia resources to use efficaciously in or outside the classroom, this materials will assist teachers to effectively teach and develop the learners' vocabulary which will enable them to resolve the reading comprehension challenges that the learners experience. This theme seeks to determine the learning and teaching support materials that teachers use to overcome the reading comprehension challenged that Grade 11 EFAL learners experience.

Teacher 2 used comprehension passage handouts to teach the lesson, learners had their own dictionaries in place to check the words are not familiar to them, these are words such as vulnerable, emissions, hesitate etc.

Teacher 5 used the comprehension passage handouts to teach reading, all the learners had their own copies of the comprehension passages, there are no other materials that were used other than the handouts.

Teacher 6 used the comprehension passage handout to teach passage, all learners had a copy of the comprehension passage.

From the data presented above, it is evident that teachers rely mainly on the copies of the comprehension passages. This suggests that there are no enough learning and teaching support materials being used to support and facilitate reading comprehension lessons. This implies that there is no effective teaching and learning of reading comprehension skills as there are no materials in place to assist in scaffolding and making reading easier to interpret and to comprehend. This finding is supported by the findings of Nanda and Azmy (2020) who state that lack of LTSM has a negative impact on

learners reading comprehension as most learners are left with their challenges over the unfamiliar words that they do not understand which makes it difficult for them to understand the meaning of the passage. Similarly, Mbuqe (2020) asserts that lack of LTSM in schools lead to underachievement of learners which compromises their' fundamental rights and goals for learning. Equally, Matruty and Que (2021) maintain that material such as textbook, flashcards etc. greatly assist to facilitate teaching and learning, especially for learners with learning needs. Namaziandost, Razmi, Ahmad Tilwani and Pourhosein Gilakjani (2022) also found that authentic reading materials enhances learners reading motivation and their reading abilities. Parallel to this, Benziane and Omari (2023) emphasise the importance of using learning and teaching support materials such as flashcards to enhance the learners' language vocabulary in order to support reading comprehension. As indicated, learning and teaching support materials are needed to ensure the smooth running of reading comprehension lessons, such material must be put in place to cure the poor reading comprehension challenges experienced by learners. In light of the above, the findings indicate that schools do not have learning and teaching support materials in place to ensure the smooth running of reading comprehension lessons which makes it difficult to overcome the poor reading comprehension challenges faced by Grade 11 EFAL learners.

This study has adopted the Cognitive Development Theory by Jean Piaget because it emphasises that children learn through different developmental stages which are characterised by differentiated ways of thinking (Bjorklund, 2022). The theory recognises that learners develop cognitive structures (schemas) from their interaction with the environment, when the learners learn new information in their English First additional Language lessons, this new information falls on top of what the learners already know from their interactions with the environment (Meylani, 2024).

For the same reason, this theory highlights the importance of teacher-learner interactions that support learners' cognitive development, where teachers are expected to ask learners text-based questions which will encourage learners to use different orders of thinking to correctly respond. Without a doubt, this theory aligns with this study as it recognises that learners learn best through interactions with the environment. For instance, the use of assimilation during teacher-learner interactions allows the learners to match their prior knowledge to the current information that they receive through different techniques such as questioning and brainstorming to enable learners to use their cognitive thinking skills to link their existing knowledge to what they are currently reading (Sommer, Hennies, Lewis and Alink, 2022).

The study highlights that effective teacher–learner interactions are central to improving reading comprehension among EFAL learners. Theoretically, it strengthens sociocultural and constructivist perspectives on learning; practically, it encourages interactive and scaffolded teaching approaches; and from a policy perspective, it supports the development of literacy policies, teacher training initiatives, and curriculum reforms that prioritize meaningful classroom interaction.

This study was limited to selected schools and a specific group of English First Additional Language learners Sekgosese Central, which may restrict the generalisation of the findings to other circuits in the Capricorn North District. Time constraints and the use of self-reported data have affected the depth and accuracy of the information gathered because leaners were due to write mid-term examinations. Furthermore, external factors such as learners' home environments, language backgrounds, and access to reading resources were not fully controlled, and these may have influenced reading comprehension outcomes independently of teacher-learner interactions.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the role of teacher-learner interactions in enhancing reading comprehension skills among English First Additional Language learners. The study found that teacher-learner interactions builds vocabulary, develops comprehension strategies, increases engagement and motivation and provides formative feedback during authentic meaning-making, enabling corrective instruction. The study also found that there are limited teacher-learner interactions during EFAL reading comprehension lessons as not all the learners in the classrooms are engaged in the lessons. The study revealed that there are no teaching and learning support materials to allow interactions such as group discussions, which are meant to benefit all the learners in the classroom. Again, the study found that there are no remedial activities in place to learners in order to ensure that none of the learners are left behind and all the learners receive the reading comprehension skills effectively. The study recommends that teachers should promote interactive teaching methods such as questioning, discussions, and think-pair-share activities to engage learners actively in meaning-making during reading lessons and encourage learners to predict, infer, and summarise to deepen comprehension. The study also recommends that school administrators should provide professional development workshops on effective teacher-learner interaction techniques and reading comprehension strategies wherein teachers to share best practices through peer learning communities. In addition, the study recommends that future research should study how digital platforms and interactive reading apps can enhance teacher-learner engagement in EFAL classrooms.

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8. Author Declaration

- The authors do not have conflict or competing of interest to declare.