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THE TEACHING OF READING IN GRADE 4 ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE

by

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DECLARATION

I, Amber Buys, declare that the contents of this dissertation represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

	28 July 2025
Signed	**Date**

ABSTRACT

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021, an international assessment that tests reading comprehension, revealed that 81% of South African Grade 4 learners could not identify explicit information or generate required information from a text. Reading ability is a crucial skill needed to acquire information and continue learning. The purpose of this study was first to determine how teachers teach reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. Second, the study aimed to identify the guidelines offered by policymakers on how to teach reading. The research also focused on the challenges teachers experience when teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. Last, it aimed to find out how teachers assisted struggling readers. This study employed a qualitative approach and an interpretive paradigm was used to investigate how teachers taught reading. The study was conducted at two schools in the Western Cape, a public school in the Metropolitan North District of Cape Town (School A) and a former Model C school in the Metropolitan South District in the Western Cape (School B). The participants selected for this study were four teachers in Grade 4 English Home Language from each school. Data were collected by means of document analysis, classroom observations, and semi-structured individual interviews. The researcher received ethical clearance from both the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). The study aimed to provide guidelines on how to teach reading and recommended reading strategies. The findings revealed that the teachers were qualified professionals, although they had not received specific training on how to teach reading. Furthermore, teachers applied various teaching strategies when teaching reading, some of which were recommended by policymakers in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement and Adjusted Teaching Plan. However, despite the use of these strategies, teachers experienced challenges when teaching learners how to read in Grade 4 English Home Language, the main issue being that English was not the learners' mother tongue as learners came from backgrounds where they were more exposed to Afrikaans or isiXhosa at home. Teachers identified struggling readers through baseline assessments at the beginning of the year and offered intervention programmes after school hours to aid in improving learners' reading ability.

Key words: English Home Language; Grade 4; teaching reading; reading instruction; reading strategies; challenges; Western Cape; South Africa

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GLOSSARY

Abbreviation/Acronym	Explanation
ANA	Annual National Assessment
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CPTD	Continuous Professional Teacher Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
EHL	English Home Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
Model C School	State-aided (or semi-private) School
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SADTU	South African Human Rights Commission
SAHRC	South African Democratic Teachers Union
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction and background

The inability of learners to read is a cause for great concern, as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2016 results revealed that South African Grade 4 learners achieved the lowest scores out of the six countries that participated in PIRLS Literacy Study 2016 (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, McLeod Palane, 2016:49). In the PIRLS 2021 report it was found that, for South Africa, 81% of Grade 4 learners could not read for meaning in any language, compared to 2016, which was at 78% (Spaull, 2023). South Africa has an alarming reading crisis which is of great concern. Several literacy assessments have been administered over a few years in South African primary schools, which all show that many primary school learners fail to read fluently and with comprehension (Phala & Hugo, 2022:1). This includes Grade 4 learners who are reading below their grade level. The 2016 PIRLS Report revealed that 78% of learners cannot read for meaning at Grade 4 level (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, McLeod Palane 2016:73). The Department of Basic Education released the 2021 systemic results, which showed that the COVID-19 pandemic had negatively affected learners. The results were described as 'dire' and it was stated that "learners have fallen up to 70% of a school year behind previous cohorts in language" (Western Cape Department of Education, 2022:1).

This study aims to investigate reading in Grade 4 English Home Language and to offer recommendations on how teachers could possibly improve learners' reading skills. The methods used by teachers were observed when teaching reading. Teachers play an important role in learners' reading ability. McLaughlin (2012:433) states that teachers are influential, highly valuable participants in the reading process.

A child needs to develop reading skills through being taught explicit reading strategies to become a successful reader. Klapwijk (2011:26) supports this assertion by stating that reading strategies are the instruments necessary for successful readers to confirm their understanding of a text. Teachers need to model and demonstrate reading strategies to learners as learners learn from the examples they are given,

The Western Cape Education Department launched a new reading strategy in 2020 (Schreuder, 2020:2) with the goal that every child should be able to read by the age of 10. This is in addition to several initiatives by the Department of Basic Education to address the reading crisis, which include the Read to Lead Campaign, the National Reading Remedial Plan and the Primary Teacher Education Project (Haupt, 2020:2). Reading campaigns aim to promote a 'culture of reading'. Despite the benefits of these campaigns, they have not succeeded in

resolving learners' inability to read proficiently, because they presume that learners are able to read, and therefore these programmes only benefit learners who are fully proficient in reading as it helps them to practise their reading skills. However, these campaigns are to the detriment of struggling readers as it will make them less motivated to read if they cannot identify words or comprehend texts (Willenberg, 2018).

Learners need to be taught how to read. Learners are being deprived of the strategies necessary to comprehend texts and to make meaning of texts (Klapwijk, 2011:6). Sattar and Salehi (2017:10926) found that the teaching of strategies does improve reading comprehension as reading strategies offer learners guidelines about how to plan their work, how to engage with reading problems, and how to decide on strategies to comprehend a text.

Teachers need to heed to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements established by the Department of Education, which express what should be taught although not how it should be taught. Murris (2016:652) argues that there is a lack of attention to the explicit teaching of comprehension in South African literacy policies and practices. Upon evaluating the assessment of reading comprehension in the CAPS document, Winberg et al. (2020:8) found that CAPS does not supply sufficient guidance for improving reading comprehension.

Reading proficiency in Grade 4 is a strong predictor of future academic success, yet many South African learners are not meeting this critical benchmark. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) has repeatedly shown that a significant number of Grade 4 learners in South Africa cannot read for meaning, with recent findings indicating that over 80% of learners struggle with comprehension (Stent, 2023). This ongoing literacy crisis has sparked concern among educators and researchers, particularly regarding how reading is taught in the classroom.

Existing literature identifies multiple factors contributing to poor reading outcomes. These include curriculum constraints, insufficient teacher training, overcrowded classrooms, and limited access to resources. While reading is widely recognised as foundational, much of the focus in national discourse has been on assessment results, with less emphasis placed on teachers' instructional practices, particularly in the Intermediate Phase. This highlights a critical gap in understanding what actually happens in Grade 4 English Home Language classrooms.

To address this, researcher examined a variety of reading models—including the bottom-up, top-down, and interactive models—that inform different teaching approaches. Studies also discuss practical techniques such as reading aloud, skimming, scanning, and comprehension strategies as tools for improving learner engagement and understanding. However, there remains limited in-depth, contextualised research into how teachers implement these models and strategies.

Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) was used as the theoretical theory for this study. PCK focuses on the specialised knowledge teachers need to transform content into effective instruction. This framework is especially relevant in exploring how teachers make instructional decisions when teaching reading, given the complexity of bridging curriculum demands with learner needs.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on reading instruction by examining how Grade 4 English Home Language teachers in two Cape Town schools approach reading pedagogy in their classrooms. In doing so, it seeks to understand their practices, challenges, and the contextual realities that shape how reading is taught.

Pretorius (2022:2) identified a variety of causes for the poor literacy rate in South Africa, and stated that "there is a gap between policy and implementation" as policy explains how reading should be taught but it cannot be implemented realistically in the classroom owing to various constraints such as time, classroom size and learners' competence.

The literature identifies several components essential to skilled reading, including decoding, language comprehension, and fluency (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990; Scarborough, 2001). Scarborough's reading rope model illustrates how multiple strands—such as vocabulary, background knowledge, and phonemic awareness—must work together to produce proficient readers. Effective reading instruction, therefore, requires teachers to address both word recognition and comprehension skills simultaneously.

To better understand how reading is or should be taught, various reading models have been proposed. The bottom-up model emphasises decoding and phonemic awareness, focusing on the written text as the source of meaning. In contrast, the top-down model stresses the importance of prior knowledge and reader engagement with the text. The interactive model, widely supported in current literature, integrates both approaches, encouraging readers to decode text while drawing on their cognitive and experiential understanding to construct meaning. This model is seen as particularly effective in classrooms with diverse learner needs and backgrounds.

Research also highlights the complexity of teaching reading. It is not merely the transmission of technical skills but a sophisticated process requiring professional knowledge and strategic decision-making. Teachers must be equipped with pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)—the ability to transform content knowledge into meaningful and effective instructional practices. However, not all teachers receive sufficient training in teaching reading, and classroom realities such as learner diversity and curriculum demands further complicate this task.

This study aims to explore how teachers implement reading instruction in Grade 4 English Home Language, focusing on their use of strategies, their theoretical understandings, and the contextual factors that shape their practice. By drawing on the models and theories of reading and examining teachers' application of pedagogical content knowledge, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how reading is taught in South African primary schools.

The ability to read with understanding is a fundamental skill that underpins all academic success. Research highlights that reading is not a simple act of decoding words, but a complex, multi-dimensional process involving decoding, comprehension, and fluency (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990). Scholars such as Scarborough (2001) have demonstrated that skilled reading depends on the integration of word recognition and language comprehension, both of which need to be intentionally developed in classroom practice. However, despite the importance of reading, "South African learners continue to perform poorly in international assessments such as PIRLS", which found that "over 80% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning" (Stent, 2023).

In response to these findings, researchers have developed models of reading to guide how reading should be taught. The bottom-up model prioritises phonemic awareness and decoding, while the top-down model centres on the reader's prior knowledge and cognitive processes. The interactive model, which combines both approaches, is widely regarded as the most effective for developing comprehension, especially in classrooms with diverse learners (Stanovich, 1980; Babashamsi et al., 2013).

Equally important is the use of explicit reading strategies to support comprehension. Strategies such as activating prior knowledge, predicting, visualising, summarising, and monitoring comprehension are strongly supported in both research and policy (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; DBE, 2011b). These strategies are most effective when taught explicitly, modelled by the teacher, and practiced across the three key reading phases: before, during, and after reading. In line with Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) guidelines, teachers are expected to scaffold reading development by aligning strategy use with these phases.

However, research indicates that many teachers lack specialised training in the teaching of reading and struggle to implement reading strategies effectively (Hugo, 2021; Phala & Hugo, 2016). This highlights the importance of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)—a theoretical framework that underpins this study. PCK refers to teachers' ability to transform content into teachable formats that meet learners' needs. It is particularly relevant to understanding how teachers choose and apply reading strategies in real classroom contexts.

This study seeks to explore how Grade 4 English Home Language teachers in the Cape Metropole teach reading, focusing on the reading models, strategies, and pedagogical

knowledge they employ. It aims to contribute to the growing body of research that calls for deeper insight into the instructional choices teachers make and the contextual realities that shape reading instruction in South African schools.

In summary, the preliminary literature reviewed establishes the importance of effective reading instruction, contextualises South Africa's literacy challenges, and introduces the theoretical lens the researcher used to analyse the data about how reading is taught.

1.2 Rationale

"The ability to read and write is the foundation on which all further learning is based, and the ability to read for meaning and pleasure is without a doubt the most important skill that children can learn in primary school" (Schäfer, 2022:1). The South African Human Rights Commission states that, having the ability to read and write is a basic human right (SAHRC, 2021:3). The Commission established a Section 11 Committee consisting of child rights' experts and experts in reading in all South African languages. The Committee was tasked with developing a document on the minimum reading norms in the home languages of children in South Africa. It is imperative that learners are able to read, as it will allow them to succeed academically in all learning areas.

Banditvilai (2020:4) found that reading strategies have a significant effect on learners' reading comprehension ability, and that learners need to be taught the use of various reading strategies so that they would know how to apply these strategies to read successfully. Banditvilai (2020:4) states that teachers need to be skilled in this area in order to teach reading strategies which will help learners to comprehend and to apply the appropriate strategies to become successful readers.

More research is needed regarding how South African Intermediate Phase teachers currently teach reading in the English Home Language classroom; hence, the need for this study. This study strives to advance pedagogical knowledge with respect to the explicit teaching of reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016:1) state that "there are fewer detailed descriptions of instructional practices and what teachers are doing in their classrooms". There is a lack of research about the teaching practices used by teachers when teaching reading.

My passion for reading and literacy was ignited due to my personal love of reading. During my time working at a public school, I had conversations with the English Home Language Head of Department and learned that the biggest challenge teachers faced were that learners could not read with understanding even in high school. This prompted me to research how teachers in primary school taught reading.

Professionally, I became increasingly aware of the stark gap between curriculum expectations and actual classroom practice, particularly in how reading is taught. South Africa's PIRLS results and national assessments reflect a serious literacy crisis, especially at the Grade 4 level, where learners are expected to shift from learning to read to reading to learn.

This study aims to contribute to the field by examining how Grade 4 teachers use their pedagogical content knowledge to teach reading. In doing so, it hopes to inform teacher training, curriculum development, and classroom strategies that better support learners in becoming competent, confident readers.

Research Problem

Reading is a foundational skill that underpins all other academic learning, and its successful acquisition is essential by the time learners reach Grade 4 — the phase where the curriculum requires a shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." However, South African learners continue to perform poorly in reading, particularly in Grade 4, where literacy expectations rise significantly.

The severity of the literacy crisis in South Africa has been clearly highlighted in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The PIRLS 2021 results revealed that 81% of South African Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning in any language, an alarming increase from 78% in 2016 (Stent, 2023). These statistics indicate that learners are not acquiring the necessary reading skills in the Foundation Phase and are entering the Intermediate Phase without the literacy foundation needed for academic success.

Although much attention has been given to learner performance outcomes, less research has been conducted on how teachers are teaching reading in the Intermediate Phase, particularly in Grade 4 English Home Language classrooms. There is limited empirical knowledge on the methods, strategies, and theoretical models teachers employ in their reading instruction, as well as the extent to which they possess and apply Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) specific to reading.

This study addresses the research problem by exploring the current reading instruction practices of Grade 4 EHL teachers in two selected schools, focusing on their knowledge of reading theories, their instructional strategies, and how these align with curriculum guidelines and the realities of South African classrooms. By investigating how reading is taught — not only what is taught — this study aims to contribute to improving reading comprehension outcomes through better-informed teacher development and policy support.

The severity of the literacy crisis in South Africa has been clearly highlighted in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The PIRLS 2021 results revealed that 81% of South African Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning in any language, an alarming increase from 78% in 2016 (Stent, 2023). These statistics indicate that learners are not acquiring the necessary reading skills in the Foundation Phase and are entering the Intermediate Phase without the literacy foundation needed for academic success.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges. Prolonged school closures, disruptions to face-to-face learning, and limited access to learning resources and digital technologies disproportionately affected vulnerable learners across South Africa. Studies and reports have shown that COVID-19 lockdowns resulted in significant learning loss in literacy, especially in foundational skills such as reading (DBE, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). This learning loss threatens to widen the existing reading achievement gaps and poses a critical setback for Grade 4 learners who rely on strong reading foundations to succeed academically.

1.3 Research questions

The main research question for this study is:

How is reading currently taught in Grade 4 English Home Language?

The sub-questions to be considered are:

1. What guidelines for teaching reading are recommended by the Western Cape Education Department for Grade 4 English Home Language?
2. What are the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language?
3. How do teachers assist struggling readers?

1.4 Aims

The main aim of this study is to investigate how reading is currently being taught in Grade 4 English Home Language in two selected schools in the Cape Metropolitan area.

The supporting objectives are as follows:

- To establish what reading guidelines are currently recommended for teaching reading by the Western Cape Education Department for Grade 4 English Home Language.

- To identify the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language.

- To determine how teachers assist struggling readers.

- and to student involvement and active engagement recommendations on how teachers could possibly improve learners' reading skills.

1.5 Research Paradigm and Worldview

This study is found within an interpretivist paradigm, which is positioned with a constructivist epistemology and a relativist ontology, Ontologically, the research assumed that there is not one objective reality about how teachers teach reading; alternatively, each teacher's experience reflects a subjective, context-specific reality.

Epistemologically, the study acknowledges that knowledge is constructed through interaction, experience, and reflection. This paradigm is particularly relevant to the study of reading instruction, where teachers' beliefs, backgrounds, and classroom environments shape their teaching practices. These philosophical assumptions underpin the qualitative design of the study, which is further elaborated in Chapter 3.

A qualitative research approach was adopted, using semi-structured interviews with Grade 4 English Home Language teachers. This design allowed for an in-depth exploration of teachers' lived experiences, perspectives, and instructional methods. Data were analysed thematically, guided by the principles of Braun and Clarke (2006), to identify emerging patterns in the way reading is taught. A more detailed account of the research design, data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations is provided in Chapter 3.

1.6 Chapter division of the study

The research study is divided into six chapters. These chapters are described briefly below.

Chapter One: Introduction

The research topic, the background, rationale, and the research questions are introduced in this chapter. The aims and objectives of the study are discussed, and the chapter also outlines the chapter divisions of the research.

Chapter Two: Literature review

Chapter Two explores the literature on reading, what reading entails, and the various strategies teachers use when teaching reading. The literature is discussed in the literacy landscape in South Africa pertaining to reading. Chapter Two also explores the theoretical framework which underpins this study, offering a description and how it will be applied in this study.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

The research design, research methodology, and details of the three data collection methods that were used in the study, are presented in Chapter Three. Furthermore, the chapter provides the data analysis methods that were utilised and explains how the trustworthiness and reliability of the findings were established.

Chapter Four: Presentation of data

In this chapter, the findings that were obtained from the three datasets are presented. The data were analysed manually, and themes were identified, analysed and linked to the finding of the literature reviewed.

Chapter Five: Findings, discussions and analysis

This chapter discusses the themes that were derived from the research findings which are linked to the literature review and research questions.

Chapter Six: Recommendations

In this chapter, conclusions are drawn based on the research findings. Furthermore, recommendations are offered for the teaching of reading for policymakers and schools.

1.6 Chapter summary

This study is aimed at determining how Grade 4 English Home Language teachers teach reading and what challenges they face with teaching reading. Last, it looks at how struggling readers are assisted.

Furthermore, this study is divided into six chapters which provide an outline of the research process and data analysis conducted.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study aimed to explore how reading is being taught currently in Grade 4 English Home Language in two selected schools in the Cape Metropolitan area. This chapter provides insight into why Grade 4 learners continue to perform poorly in reading, as found in standardised tests such as PIRLS. The chapter first defines reading and the importance of being able to read. South Africa's performance in international and national standardised tests is discussed, primarily the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), which concluded that South African Grade 4 English Home Language learners perform poorly in reading. The challenges contributing to the low performance in this standardised test are discussed: a recent study found that over 80% of Grade 4 learners in South Africa cannot read for meaning (Stent, 2023).

This introduces literature on reading theories. Once the importance of reading has been discussed, various reading models are examined which describe different approaches to teaching reading, as these suggest how reading should be taught. The bottom-up, the top-down, and interactive models are explored. Several studies have been conducted on how reading should be taught in English Home Language. The literature examines what has been written about reading intervention programmes. Furthermore, the literature study explores the literacy landscape in South Africa by discussing South Africa's participation in reading tests such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study and the Annual National Assessments.

This chapter explores literature on the current literacy crisis in South Africa in general and identifies and critiques the teaching pedagogies teachers currently employed in the teaching of reading and the guidelines recommended by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. Thereafter, the various techniques and strategies that teachers may use to teach reading are explained, which assist learners to read with understanding, such as reading aloud, skimming and scanning.

Lastly, the theoretical framework is examined which underpins this study, pedagogical content knowledge. The framework focuses on the knowledge teachers possess and the role they play in the teaching of reading.

The literature reviews the research conducted in the field of teaching reading by teachers of Grade 4 English Home Language in primary schools.

2.2 Reading

2.2.1 What is reading?

Reading is an important skill which all learners need in order to succeed academically. Nurdianingsih (2021:285) states that reading enhances vocabulary, improving the spelling and writing of learners. All formal education is dependent upon the fundamental skill of reading (Moats, 1999:5). According to Pang et al. (2003:6), reading is described simply as understanding written texts which comprise two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Furthermore, a simple view of reading is defined as "consisting of two components, decoding and linguistic comprehension, both held to be necessary for skilled reading" (Hoover & Gough, 1990:127). These two processes will be elaborated on below.

Gough and Tunmer (1986:7) equate reading with decoding and comprehension. Decoding is a critical component in word recognition. It is defined as an art in which readers must apply their knowledge of the mapping system, consciously and deliberately, to produce a plausible pronunciation of a word that they do not recognise instantly (Beck & Juel, 1995:9). Grasping the ability to decode early is important since this early skill accurately predicts later skill in reading comprehension (Beck & Juel, 2002:2). According to Murray (2016), if a learner cannot recognise words in a text accurately and naturally, fluency will be influenced and, in turn, reading comprehension will suffer. Similarly, if a learner has a poor understanding of the meaning of words, reading comprehension will suffer. Learners who succeed at reading comprehension are skilled in both word recognition and language comprehension.

Reading encompasses various elements in order to be achieved successfully. As seen in Figure 2.1, an infographic that was developed by Scarborough (2001:25), often called Scarborough's rope or the reading rope, explains how crucial language skills work together to develop skilled reading. The illustration depicts how various elements such as word recognition and language comprehension work together to develop skilled readers. The two elements cannot work separately or else the level of skilled reader will not be achieved. In Scarborough's reading rope emphasis is placed on language comprehension, which includes background knowledge; vocabulary; language structures; verbal reasoning and literacy knowledge. Second, these elements are combined with word recognition which prioritises word recognition; decoding and sight recognition.

Therefore, when a teacher teaches learners how to read, they should not only focus on developing only one skill such as word recognition. On the contrary, teachers should combine word recognition and language comprehension which will develop skillful readers.
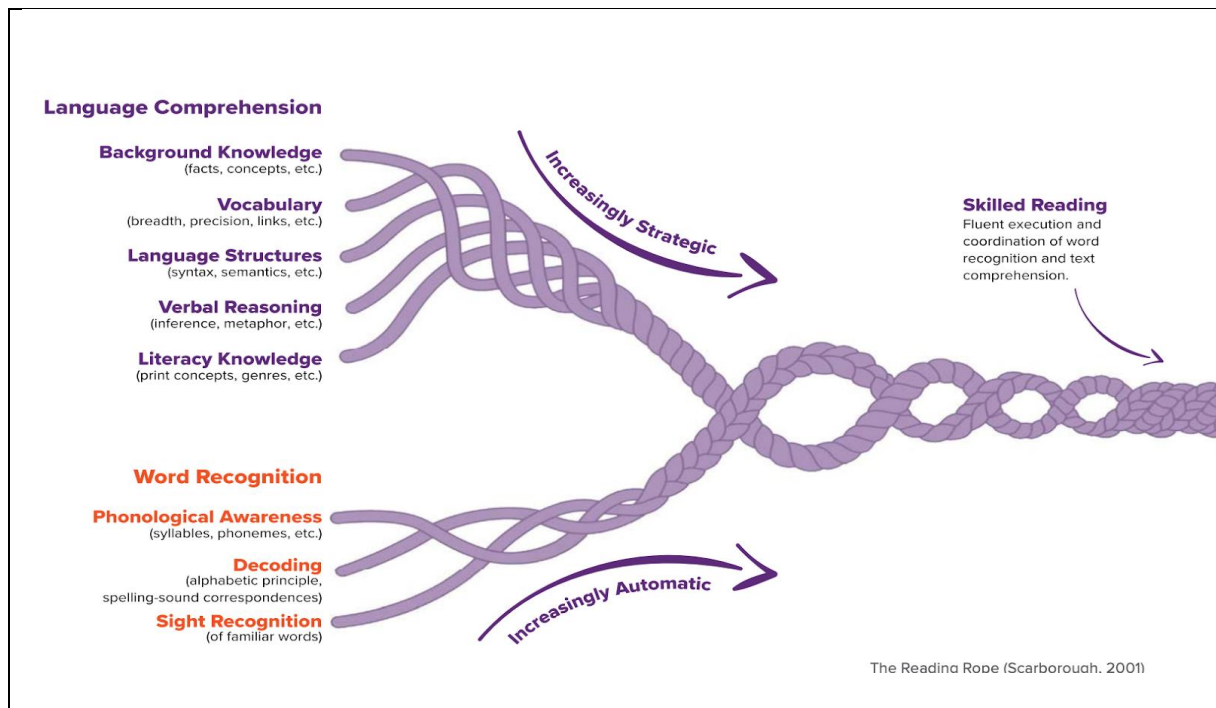
Figure 2.1: The reading rope (Scarborough, 2001)

There is an important connection between language and thought in reading (Carrell et al., 1988:12). Reading can be defined as incorporating numerous interactive processes between the reader and the text in which the reader utilises their knowledge to form, to create and to construct meaning. Banditvilai (2020:43) states that "reading is a highly strategic process during which readers are constantly constructing meaning using a variety of strategies." In other words, readers employ various strategies and techniques to derive meaning from a text. Liu (2010:152) states that reading commonly implies engaging with language texts in written or printed form; it comprises processing language texts. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016:230) add that, in order to derive meaning from a text, the reader engages with the text. There are various categories of information processing: bottom-up processing and top-down processing.

Reading is an important component in teaching language as reading skills are a powerful mechanism for obtaining a broad range of information (Sangia, 2014:1). Schäfer (2020) states that "the ability to read is the foundation on which all further learning is based". A child cannot receive any information and store it in their thoughts if they are unable to read and understand what they have read. Castles et al. (2018:5) state that reading is "the basis for the acquisition of knowledge". In order to acquire new knowledge and information one needs to have the ability to read and understand a text successfully and one can only achieve this by means of knowing reading strategies. Reading is only successful if the reader has understood the text they have read.

The ability to read is of such importance that the South African Human Rights Commission has deemed reading ability as being "one of the most important minimum 'core' outcomes with respect to the right to a basic education" (SAHRC, 2021:n.p).

The current literacy crisis in South Africa is alarming because a basic human right is not being met since learners do not possess the ability to read and comprehend what they have read. Since reading predominantly takes place in the classroom, the researcher aimed to determine how teachers taught reading which hoped to explain the literacy crisis.

According to Phala and Hugo (2016:176), "reading is a skill that needs to be taught as it increases one's vocabulary and independence". While learners need to develop reading skills, not all teachers are trained to teach reading. Classrooms are made of a diverse group of learners; therefore, teachers should use various teaching methods to assist learners according to their reading needs. Hugo (2021:28) postulates that the teaching of reading is not as easy as it may appear; it is a complex process as it requires expert knowledge and employing reading strategies by teachers. Finally, consider the learners' reading needs and learning styles.

Overall, reading is an essential skill which learners need to develop in order to succeed academically. There are two components to reading, which are: to decode (recognise words) and language comprehension. A successful reader can decode words in a text and understand what they have read. By recognising and understanding the meaning of words, a learner will be able to understand the text they have read.

2.2.2 Models of reading

Models of reading are different perspectives on how reading happens and what happens during the reading process. Researchers have identified three methods of teaching reading, which includes the bottom-up model, the top-down model, and the interactive model. These models of reading are explained in the sections that follow, offering an overview of each of these models by theorists. Almutairi (2018:21) states that "the three models differ from one another based on their concentration of the method that readers apply in order to obtain meaning from a written passage". Each reading model emphasizes different aspects to interpret written text.

2.2.2.1 Bottom-up model

The bottom-up model considers reading "as translating, decoding and an encoding process" (Ngabut, 2015:25). Nunan (1991:64) views reading as "simply a matter of decoding a series of written symbols into their aural equivalents in the pursuit of making sense of a text". The bottom-up reading model prioritises the written or printed text.

Liu (2010:152) explains that reading is guided by a process in which meaning is the outcome. According to Butler (2017:18), learners learn to read by learning the relationship between sounds and letters (phonemic awareness) and then by developing words and sentences. In the South African school context, developing phonemic awareness should begin early in Grade 1 (CAPS, 2011:14).

Furthermore, Ardhani (2011:84) expresses that reading in the bottom-up model is a process that requires "the accuracy of sound, perception and identification of a range of letters, words, spelling patterns, and other language units". A reader should have the ability to identify sounds, recognise letters, spell out words and understand and read sentences. Baha (2017:18) asserts that this model is effective for teaching young learners, since the focus is placed on the letters, recognition of their shapes and reading individual words. By the time learners reach Grade 4, they should have developed their phonemic awareness, recognise letters, sounds, spelling words, and comprehend reading texts.

Despite the prominence of this model in the language classroom, Baha (2017:19) offers an opposing view that this model has numerous drawbacks as it forgets the reader's expectations and attitudes, which is in direct opposition to the top-down model. Furthermore, Amadi (2019:92) indicates that the theory was criticised for being linear, where information is processed from lower level processes to high-level units only, and that it does not allow for changes that might happen at low-level processing units owing to influences from high-level processes. Last, one of the shortcomings of this model is that it failed to disclose the importance of 'meaning' within reading (Amadi, 2019:92).

Overall, this model emphasizes on letter recognition, sounds, and reading sentences. However, it ignores whether the reader comprehends the content. If learners can recognise letters from the alphabet, spell words in a sentence, and pronounce those words but fails to understand the meaning of the words, then they will not be able to read with comprehension.

2.2.2.2 Top-down model

Goodman (1967) established the top-down model and defined reading as a "psycholinguistic guessing game" which implies that the reader predicts the meaning of a text built mainly on their current or prior knowledge (Suraprajit, 2019:455). The top-down model is the direct opposite of the bottom-up model. The top-down reading model focuses on what the reader contributes to the text and reading is guided by meaning (Liu, 2010:154). In other words, learners learn to read by utilising their current knowledge of the content and genre of a text to make sense of it (Butler, 2017:19). The reader scans through the text, creates assumptions, accepts or rejects these assumptions and makes new assumptions. The reader is more important than the text in the reading process. The top-down model highlights the role that both the reader's background knowledge and prior experience about a particular topic play in

order to derive meaning from a text (Almutairi, 2018:21). This model emphasises the significance of diverse comprehension skills, which includes prediction, analysis, creating inference from the text and summarising (Almutairi, 2018:24). According to Ngabut (2015:26), in the top-down model of reading, the cognitive and language knowledge of the reader plays an important role in deriving meaning from a text.

The top-down process is described by Farrell (2002:134) as the reader first looking at the text; thereafter, the reader guesses or makes predictions regarding the content of the text, which is based on their previous knowledge and experience of the topic, once they have read the title, the headings and subheadings. Thereafter, the reader continues to read the text and seeks confirmation pertaining to the subject based on their previous knowledge of that subject. Baha (2017:45) states that, when the reader's own experience is involved in the reading process, the teaching of reading is more effective. Nunan (1991:67) states that one of the drawbacks of the top-down model is that it sometimes fails to differentiate sufficiently between beginning readers and fluent readers.

When readers relate a text to their experiences and prior knowledge, they better understand the topic. They engage with the text by predicting, assuming, or analysing to understand it.

2.2.2.3 Interactive model

Stanovich (1980:35) states that the interactive model is a combination of the bottom-up and top-down model. Baha (2017:45) states that there is increased engagement from the reader during the reading process. Furthermore, the learner employs their subject knowledge, their prior experience of written words, their reading and their own assumptions to make predictions about the reading text. One of the key advantages of this model is that the communicative activities and the reading skills are combined. The interactive model shows that a competent learner decodes and comprehends a written text as they read and the learner attempts to decipher the meaning through active engagement with the text (Babashamsi et al., 2013:151). Employing the interactive reading model places greater responsibility on the teachers who then become facilitators during the reading process instead of performance monitors (McRae, 2012:22).

Therefore, it can be said that the interactive model is a more suitable model as it encompasses both phonemic awareness, word recognition and the reader's experience and engagement with the text.

2.3 Reading strategies

According to Snow (2002:12), the reading process consists of three components: the reader, the text and the activity or purpose for reading. He advises readers to use their cognitive skills—attention, memory, critical analysis, inference, and visualization—as well as their motivation or purpose for reading.

To understand a text or book, use reading strategies. Nadea et al. (2021:31) affirm this notion that various reading strategies can be employed by the reader during the reading process and the reading strategies will assist them in comprehending the text. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016: 224) established seven effective reading strategies. These strategies include activation and using prior knowledge, asking questions, drawing conclusions, predicting, summarising, visualising and comprehension monitoring. These strategies are recommended in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement English Home Language for Grade 4–6 (DBE, 2011b:17).The section which follows defines each of these strategies.

Duke and Pearson (2002:212) recommend that "teachers should monitor students' use of comprehension strategies and their success at understanding what they read. Results of this monitoring should, in turn, inform the teacher's instruction." Teachers need to facilitate by teaching learners' various comprehension strategies as this will assist them in understanding what they read. Teachers also need to monitor how learners use these comprehension strategies to ensure that they are being applied correctly. Teachers should demonstrate or model these reading strategies by reading texts aloud to the class and showing the learners how they have applied these reading strategies in the reading process. Applying reading strategies improves comprehension.

2.3.1 Activation of prior knowledge

Klapwijk (2015:5) states that new knowledge is learnt effectively when associated with existing knowledge. According to Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016:234), "readers activate their background knowledge and apply it to aid and comprehend what they are reading". This knowledge comprises the reader's lived experiences combined with their knowledge of how written text works. Essentially, prior knowledge involves all the readers' experiences they have had during their lives, including knowledge they have acquired elsewhere. Bleach (2001:4) asserts that reading comprehension depends greatly on learners' background knowledge about the world. This knowledge is acquired from their own culture and experiences. When readers have knowledge about a topic they are reading, they are more capable of reading a text in which that topic was discussed, even when the sentence structure is complex or the words are unfamiliar. Children have a greater understanding of a text if they have higher levels of

background knowledge about a particular topic, both in terms of quantity and quality of knowledge (Smith et al., 2021:226).

Herczog and Porter (2010:17) support the activation of prior knowledge, stating that by investing time in assisting learners to activate their prior knowledge regarding a subject before reading, acknowledges their past learning, develops interest, and will assist them later to associate new information with what they already know. Despite various scholars' support of activating prior knowledge, Grabe (2004:50) argues that complications are presented with texts that introduce new information or information from subjects of which readers have no special knowledge. The activation of prior knowledge is a powerful strategy to assist learners in understanding a text they have read. It allows learners to link what they know already about a topic to the new text they are about to read.

Klapwijk (2015:5) explains that this strategy draws on as much information as possible from learners regarding the topic in the form of a discussion. It is recommended to consider linguistic and cultural differences without excluding any information. When learners connect new information to what has already been learned, it makes the new content more relatable and easier to understand. Learners might also be more interested in the text and engage with the text. Lastly, by relating new information to prior knowledge, they are likely to retain the new information. Furthermore, activation of prior knowledge acts as a firm foundation for reading comprehension.

To activate prior knowledge, teachers should provide relatable texts for learners. In reading relevant and relatable texts, learners will automatically have prior knowledge of the topic being read. The next reading strategy, prediction, is related to the activation of prior knowledge.

2.3.2 Prediction

Prediction involves learners creating assumptions about the text prior to reading it. According to Harvey and Goudvis (2007:12), predicting is described as the readers' ability to "make thoughtful guesses of what they are reading". Vacca and Vacca (2008:257) define prediction as being equal to the activation of prior knowledge and states that drawing upon prior knowledge or making predictions about a text's content is foundational and that it should be focused on as much as possible during the early school years. Liou (2021:1) states that predicting a text can help the reader to focus their attention on expecting the main ideas in the text.

Prediction is a strategy that can be used during the pre-reading process. It can be based on the title of the reading text. Prediction allows the learner to be involved and engaged in the reading process, by helping learners to form their own ideas about the text.

2.3.3 Monitoring comprehension

This strategy refers to the reader being aware that they understand what they have read, or when the reader does not understand, the reader applies relevant strategies to improve their comprehension of a text (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016:235). When using this strategy, learners assess whether they understand what they have read. Assisting learners to develop monitoring skills helps them to increase their comprehension of a text (Herczog & Porter, 2020:13).

Teachers should ask learners questions during the reading process. They can begin by asking lower-level questions such as what, when, and why, and then progress to higher level questions that involve defining, identifying, and categorising, based on the reading text. By doing this, the teacher monitors the learners' comprehension of the text.

2.3.4 Visualisation

This reading strategy refers to the reader's ability to create mental images of a text to understand the processes they experience during reading. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016:235) state that visualising plays a crucial role in narrative texts. When readers engage with narrative texts, they can easily understand what is taking place by visualising where the story is happening, the characters and their personalities or the plot of the text.

Furthermore, Koning and Van der Schoot (2013:269) classify visualisation into two categories, internal visualisation and external visualisation. Internal visualisation refers to the reader mentally visualising a reading text by creating mental, nonverbal images of the information shown in a text. External visualisation refers to nonverbal representations of textual content that are available in the environment, for instance, a drawing that represents the textual content in a nonverbal representation (Koning & Van der Schoot, 2013:267). Visualisation can be achieved in the form of previewing pictures or videos of the subject or topic about which the learners are reading.

2.3.5 Summarising

Klapwijk (2015:7) states that teaching learners how to summarise is deemed to be a crucial skill to succeed academically. Summarising is defined as readers combining information in a text to explain in their own words what the text is about (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016:235). Basically, readers rephrase what they have read. Erasmus (2021:27) asserts that, when a reader summarises, the reader focuses on the main ideas and important details supporting these main ideas. There are various methods for teaching summarisation; one of these methods includes beginning with brief activities and gradually escalating to summarising whole texts (Klapwijk, 2015:7). This strategy is advantageous as it permits the reader to construct

their own opinions, integrate their thoughts and ideas and explain why they added or left out information (Erasmus, 2021:28).

Summarising can be completed after reading a text. When learners summarise a text, they highlight the main ideas about a text. In summarising a text, the teacher is able to determine whether the learner has understood what they have read. Summarising is not merely retelling the text; it is learners expressing the main ideas of the text in their own words. Learners exclude unnecessary information from the text when summarising it. Teachers need to model summarising to assist learners in applying this strategy.

2.4 Reading phases

The reading process consists of three phrases: before reading, during reading and after reading. The Grade 4 CAPS document (DBE, 2011b:10) recommends that teachers follow three reading phases when teaching reading. The pre-reading phase offers a scaffold for new ideas and offers room for prediction. The second phase, reading or during reading, permits the reader to combine their own knowledge and information that they contribute to the text with new information from the text. Lastly, the post-reading phase permits readers to construct and process their comprehension of the text (Setiyaningsih, 2013:4).The reading phases will be discussed below.

2.4.1 Pre-reading phase

The pre-reading phase attempts to introduce and pique interest in the topic; it also aims to motivate readers by offering reasons for reading or assisting them to identify their own reasons, and it aims to provide language preparation for the text if it is necessary (Williams, 1987:2). According to Klapwijk (2015:5), "a key point in the pre-reading phase is the use of two strategies as basis for pre-reading: determining the purpose for reading and determining text type (or Activating Text Knowledge)". The pre-reading phase assists readers in determining why they are reading a text and assists them with identifying what type of text they are reading. During the pre-reading phase, the activation of prior knowledge and prediction can be applied before reading the text. Prediction can be done based on the title of the text.

The pre-reading phase is an introduction to the reading passage so that learners can gain an idea of what the reading text will be about. This will assist learners in understanding what they will read. During the pre-reading phase, visualisation can also take place. Teachers achieve this by showing the learners images or videos that relate to the reading text.

2.4.2 During-reading phase

The during-reading phase makes it possible for teachers to assess their learners thoroughly and to learn more about how they read and to identify issues with reading learners may have.

Second, the reading phase offers teachers the opportunity to teach learners various reading strategies (Klapwijk, 2015:6). This is the reader's direct contact with the reading text, from the beginning to the end (Huong, 2018:404). During the reading phase the reader performs the act of reading the text.

During the reading phase, the teacher and the learner need to be engaged in the reading process by reading aloud and listening. The teacher should be monitoring the learners' understanding by asking questions about the text. Teachers should model reading by reading aloud. When the teacher reads aloud, the learner hears how the teacher pronounces words and how meaning is made from these words through reading. Learners should then be given an opportunity to read aloud too.

2.4.3 Post-reading phase

This is the point when the during-reading phase ends and the post-reading phase begins. The main aim of the post-reading phase is to ensure satisfactory comprehension of the text. If teachers use straightforward post-reading strategies, it can assist learners to derive meaning from the text they have read and to clarify any misconceptions they may have experienced (Tarshaei & Karbalaei, 2015:363).

During the post-reading phase teachers need to determine whether learners have understood completely what they have read. This can be achieved by asking learners to complete comprehension-based questions, which range from lower level to higher level questions, based on the text in their workbooks. Teachers must then mark these questions with the learners to determine whether they have answered the questions correctly. If learners did not answer the questions correctly, teachers should offer feedback on where they went wrong.

2.5 Reading with comprehension

Snow (2002:11) defines reading as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language". In other words, the reader draws and derives meaning by engaging with a written text by making predictions, summarising the main idea, questioning their predictions, and clarifying unknown concepts (Liou, 2021:1). To understand a text successfully, a reader must be aware of a variety of skills, such as "attention, memory, inferencing, motivation (e.g., reading goals, interest) and knowledge (e.g., domain knowledge, linguistic knowledge)" (Butterfuss Kim, & Kendeou, 2020:2). Reading comprehension is viewed as a process in which the reader utilises skills and strategies to reconstruct a written text (Habib, 2016:132). Reading skills and strategies are used by readers to understand the text they are reading.

Teachers need to assess learners' ability to comprehend a text, Habib (2016:136) states that, when assessing reading comprehension, teachers should utilise multiple methods. There is not a single technique which can truly measure learners reading skills. Reading comprehension aims to assist the reader to understand a text. Readers who comprehend well, monitor their understanding as they read and utilise strategies or techniques to understand and construct meaning. Once that has been achieved, the reader can understand the text content. Finally, the reader can draw conclusions about what they have read to illustrate their understanding after reading a text (Nurdianingsih, 2021:285).

2.6 Teaching methods

Teaching methods are important for effective teaching and learning; therefore, they should be applied appropriately. There are two main types of teaching methods, specifically: teacher-centred methods and learner-centred methods. These two methods will be discussed in the sections that follow.

2.6.1 Teacher-centred methods

The teacher-centred method entails that the teacher has control over what is taught and under which circumstances. Learners are less engaged in the lesson (Al-Zu'be, 2013:25). In this method the teacher possesses all the knowledge. Teachers play the active role, and learners are passive in this approach (Makhubele, 2015:23). Toh (1994:13) states that there are specific elements which determine that it is a teacher-centred lesson. These elements include:

- The teacher talks excessively and more than the learners in the lesson.
- Instruction is predominantly with the whole class.
- The lesson is guided by a textbook.
- The teacher determines each phase within the lesson.

Desks and chairs are typically arranged in orderly rows oriented towards the chalkboard.

- Learners do not have the freedom to leave their seats.

Overall, this method views teachers as the main source of information in the learning process. Learners are only receivers of this information and have limited input in the learning process. The teacher dictates strictly how the lesson will be conducted and works towards specific outcomes.

2.6.2 Learner-centred methods

Learner-centred methods emphasise student involvement and active engagement in the learning process, rather than solely focusing on the teachers' role in transferring information to a certain extent. Toh (1994:14) highlights the following elements by which a learner-centred classroom can be identified:

- The learners and the teacher have equal time to talk during the lesson;
- Teaching occurs individually or in small groups, instead of being guided as an entire class by the educator;
- A variety of learning resources are available to allow learners to utilise them independently or in small groups;
- The direction of the lesson is determined by the interaction between the learner and the teacher; and
- The classroom is set up in a way that assists learners to work jointly, alone or in groups. Learners may move around freely in the classroom if necessary during an activity.

In a learner-centred approach, the learner and the teacher both have responsibilities in the lesson. The learner has a certain amount of autonomy. Furthermore, the learner is actively engaged in the lesson.

Overall, the two methods described above have their advantages and disadvantages. These two methods differ vastly. In the teacher-centred method the learner has no input in the lesson besides receiving information. However, in the learner-centred method the learner has equal input in the lesson to the teacher. Also, not all schools have sufficient learning resources to aid and enhance lessons. The teacher-centred approach is more applicable to the South African classroom context. Owing to overcrowded classrooms and behavioural issues or learning barriers, the teacher may prefer to have more control over the classroom environment.

2.7 Techniques to teaching reading

Teachers make use of various techniques and strategies when teaching reading. Banditvilai (2020:46) states that, in the reading process, learners need to employ different strategies to assist them in acquiring, storing and retrieving information. Reading strategies enable learners to become better readers.

In the South African context of teaching reading, Hugo (2021:29) asserts that there is a lack of research pertaining to strategies and methods that primary school teachers utilise to teach reading. The section that follows describes strategies employed by teachers in South Africa, in accordance with the CAPS document.

2.7.1 Reading aloud

Reading aloud entails reading by voicing the text, so the learners read with the right words and intonation to gain more information, enhance their vocabulary and improve their pronunciation. This strategy assists learners to comprehend the meaning of the text (Sofyan et al., 2021:12). Kassim (2019:87) acknowledges that this is an important strategy as it encourages learners to

read and consequently improves their reading comprehension which ultimately improves their literacy competency.

2.7.2 Skimming

Skimming is employed when an individual seeks and wants a general impression of what the text contains, according to Jose and Raja (2011:5). When skimming a page, the learner reads quickly through the texts and skips the details. They read the first sentence of each paragraph. Every paragraph typically includes a topic sentence which mentions the primary idea. Skimming is a reading strategy for speed reading. The aim of skimming is to get an outline of the structure of the text and its main objective. One of the benefits of skimming is that it is a more thorough strategy which "requires an overall view of the text and implies a definite reading competence" (Ngoc, 2002:196). Furthermore, Ngoc (2002:197) adds that skimming allows learners to predict the purpose of the text, the main topic and, most likely, a few supporting ideas.

Overall, skimming is a useful technique when the learner is attempting to gain an idea of what the text topic is about. However, it does not aid in fully comprehending a reading text. Skimming should be used for more advanced readers as it requires the learner to be able to speed read.

2.7.3 Scanning

Scanning is a reading skill that permits the reader to find specific information quickly. Jose and Raja (2011:5) add that scanning is used when an individual is looking for specific information or an answer to a particular question. With scanning you are aware of what you are searching for before you start reading.

Scanning aims to retrieve specific information, which is vital to improving reading. Many learners attempt to read word for word; therefore they read quite slowly. Scanning can assist learners to read and comprehend a text faster. Ngoc (2002:196) adds that scanning is valuable in the pre-reading phase to construct knowledge. Second, scanning allows the reader to retrieve specific information without reading through the entire text, and scanning is mainly beneficial when the reader views schedules, tables, charts and graphs. However, Ngoc (2002: 196) critiques scanning too, stating that it is exceptionally limited as it suggests only gaining information that is suitable to the reader's motive for reading a text.

Overall, these techniques to teach reading serve their own purpose. Reading aloud assists learners with pronouncing words and expands their vocabulary. Skimming offers learners an idea of what the reading text is about and outlines the structure of a text. Finally, scanning aids in retrieving specific information. However, these techniques do not focus on the core issue of reading, i.e. understanding of reading text.

2.8 The literacy landscape in South Africa

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2016 results revealed that South African Grade 4 learners achieved the lowest scores of the six countries that participated in PIRLS Literacy 2016. The PIRLS 2021 Literacy report revealed that South Africa performed extremely poorly in reading for meaning, specifically Grade 4 learners, once again.

Children in South Africa are taught how to read in Grade 1 in their home language. The aim of the language policy and curriculum is that during Grade 1–3, learners would have developed a firm foundation of literacy in their home language. When learners reach Grade 4, they transition to English as their home language which is to their detriment as they do not have a firm foundation in English Home Language if they were taught in an African language from Grade 1–3.

When learners are in Grade 1, they have English as a First Additional Language and learn reading and writing skills in that language. The aim is that learners learn to read in their home language first, but they learn reading skills in English together with their home language reading skills. Their reading skills in English may not be firm. Consequently, when they reach Grade 4 and English becomes their Language of Learning (LoLT), they experience problems as they do not have a firm foundation of English and are expected to learn all their other subjects in English. The Grade R–3 CAPS document (DBE, 2011a:11) states that great emphasis is placed on developing oral language in Grades R and 1. Furthermore, in Grades 2 and 3 emphasis should be placed upon developing literacy in the First Additional Language and this is important for children who will use English as their LoLT in Grade 4.

2.8.1 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

South Africa has participated in international assessments such as The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), which assesses learners' reading competence, and standardised national assessments such as Annual National Assessments, which assess languages and mathematics in the Senior Phase (Grades 7–9), Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6) and in literacy and numeracy in the Foundation Phase (Grades 1–3). These two assessments will be discussed in the section that follows, with statistical evidence of Grade 4 learners' performance in these assessments. South African learners perform poorly in reading and this is evident from South Africa's poor track record in international assessments such as PIRLS (Van Staden, 2016:60).

"The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assesses reading comprehension and monitors trends in reading literacy at five-year intervals" (Howie et al., 2016:4). International assessments serve various purposes, specifically to show differences in levels of achievement between countries (Howie et al., 2016). "PIRLS assesses four broad-

based processes of comprehension typically used by fourth grade readers: focus on and retrieve explicitly stated information; make straightforward inferences; interpret and integrate ideas and information; and evaluate and critique content and textual elements", according to Mullis et al. (2016:18). The PIRLS Literacy Test encompasses various outcomes in an effort to measure the readers' competence in reading and comprehending a text. Assessing these processes will ascertain the learners' capacity to read and understand the reading text.

There are benefits and limitations to participating in broad international assessments. One of the greatest benefits of participation is that it places an obligation on a country to expose its curriculum to close scrutiny (Beaton et al., 1999:12). However, these tests may not be a reliable representation of a country's performance, as they do not consider that each country's circumstances may differ. For instance, in a country such as South Africa, reading literacy may be poor owing to a lack of resources; hence, learners' reading literacy may be lacking in comparison to that in a developed country where there are ample resources, funding and a low poverty rate. Hugo and Govender (2020:11) add that the results of these literacy assessments do not offer valid information regarding the country's literacy levels in order to inform decision-making regarding policies. However, Janks (2011:270) believes that there is an advantage in systemic assessments as they help to highlight strengths and weaknesses in education which moves governments to address any issues which arise.

South Africa participated in PIRLS for the first time in 2006. Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners were tested in South Africa. In Grade 4, a total of 16 073 learners were assessed in all 11 official languages (Howie et al., 2016:1). Grade 4 learners were specifically assessed as learners shift from learning how to read to reading to learn (Mullis et al., 2007:1). South Africa was one of 40 countries that participated. South African learners performed the poorest out of the 45 education systems which participated (Howie & Venter, 2008:1). Figure 2.2 illustrates South Africa's performance in comparison to some of the other countries that participated.
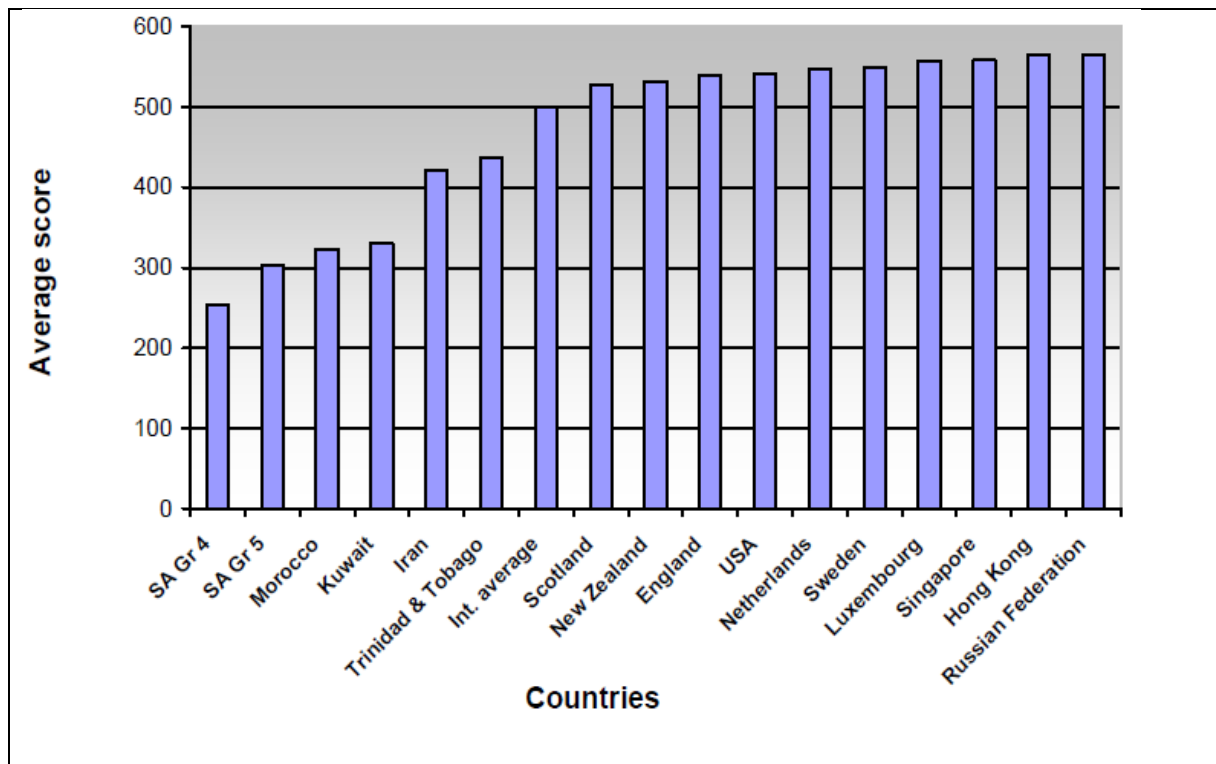
Figure 2.2: South African learners' performance compared to other countries in PIRLS 2006 (Howie, 2016:20)

Figure 2.2 illustrates that Grade 4 South African learners achieved the lowest in comparison to other countries in the first PIRLS assessment in 2006.

South Africa participated in PIRLS for the second time in 2011 (Howie et al., 2012:19). The PIRLS 2011 was conducted in Grade 4 and 5 level in 11 languages, using the easier assessment known as pre-PIRLS. Figure 2.3 illustrates the achievement in all 11 languages in Grade 4 and 5 in 2011. Learners who took the test in Afrikaans and English achieved the highest scores, which were above the International Centre point of 500 points. However, learners who wrote in Tshivenda and Sepedi achieved the lowest out of all 11 official languages. Learners who wrote in SiSwati achieved the highest in the African languages group.

However, despite participating in the pre-PIRLS in 2011, which was the easier version of the PIRLS, South Africa continued to achieve the lowest scores internationally. Figure 2.3 shows that most learners achieved a higher score when they wrote in their home language, except for Afrikaans, isiZulu and Sepedi, where there was not a great difference.
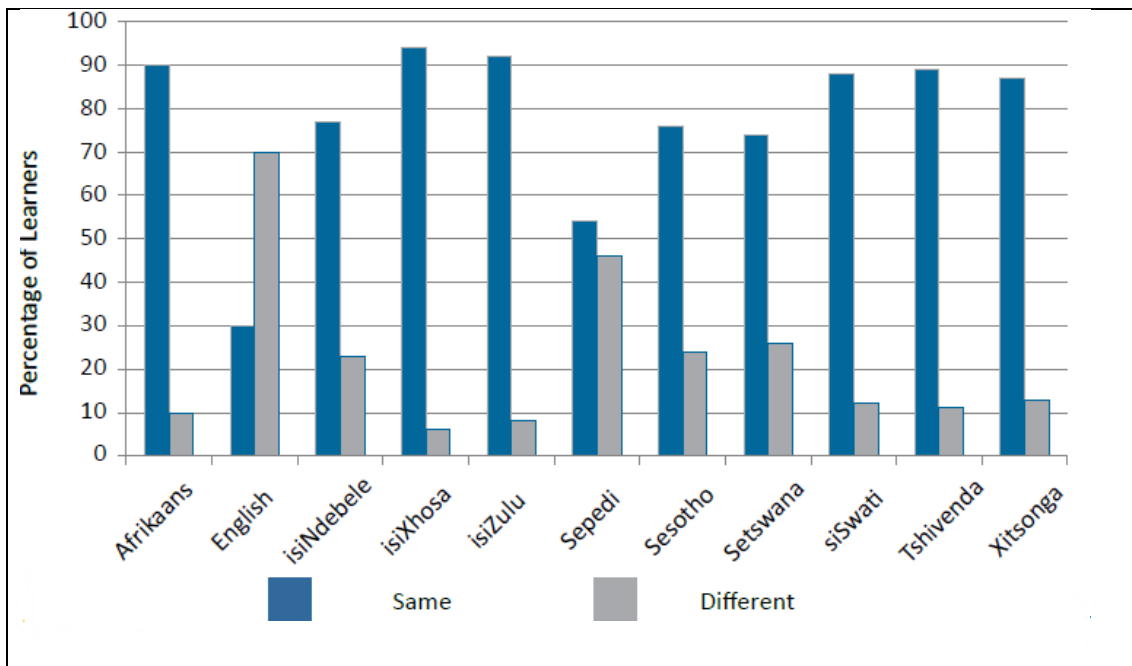
Figure 2.3: Percentage of learners tested in pre-PIRLS in a language the same as or different to their home language (PIRLS, 2011:31)
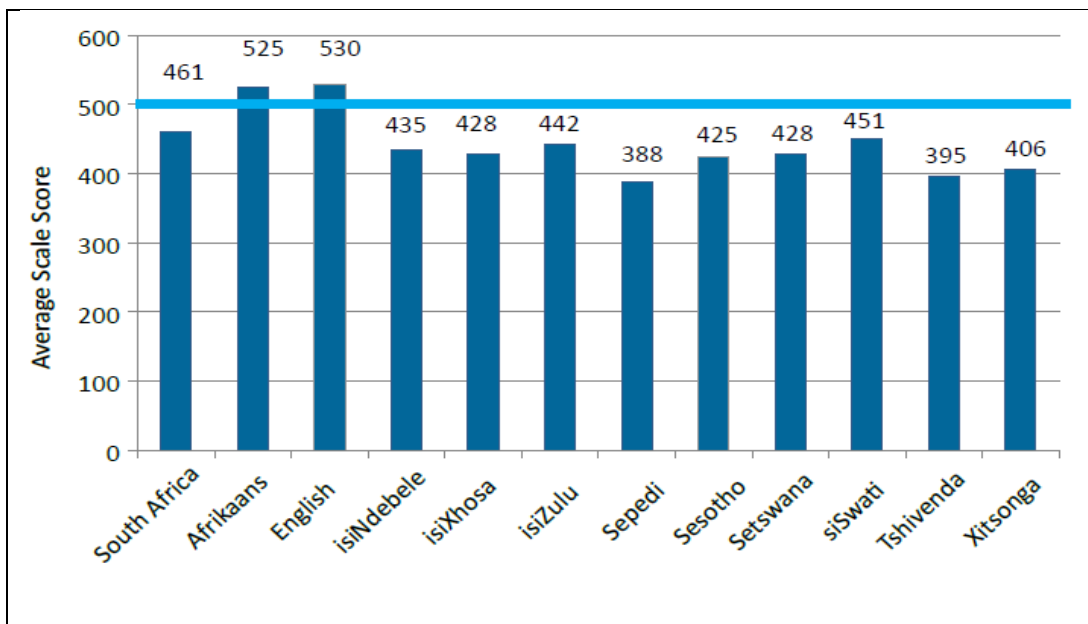
Figure 2.4: Comparison of average reading achievement between test languages (PIRLS, 2011:50)
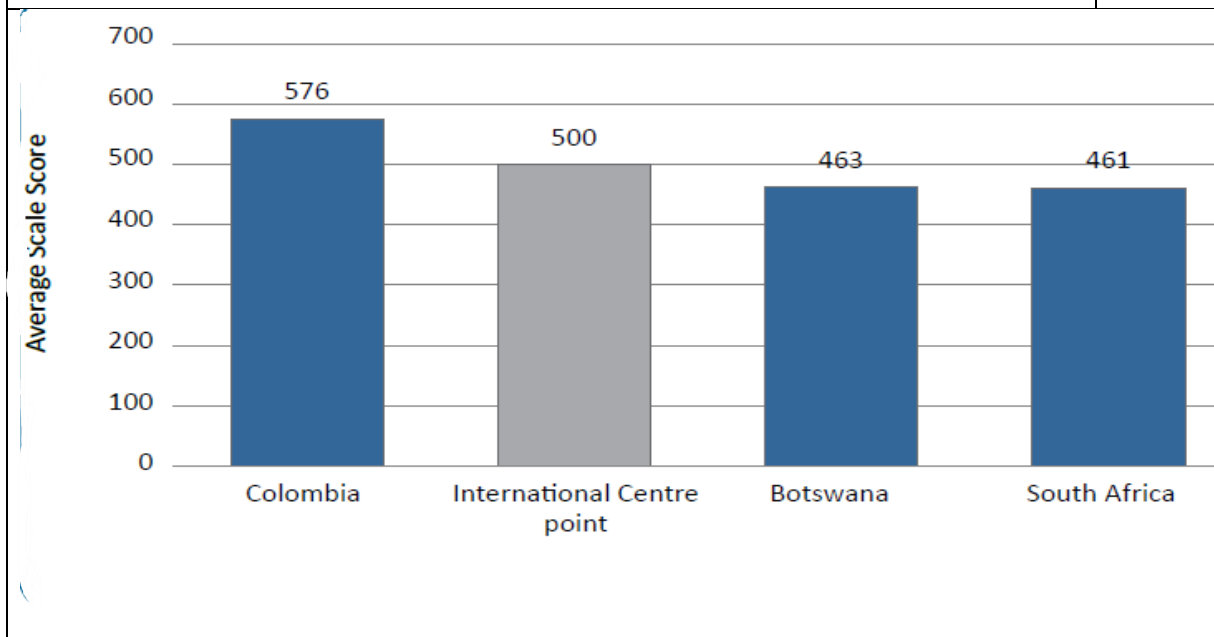
Figure 2.5: South African Grade 4 learner performance in pre-PIRLS compared internationally (PIRLS, 2011:27)
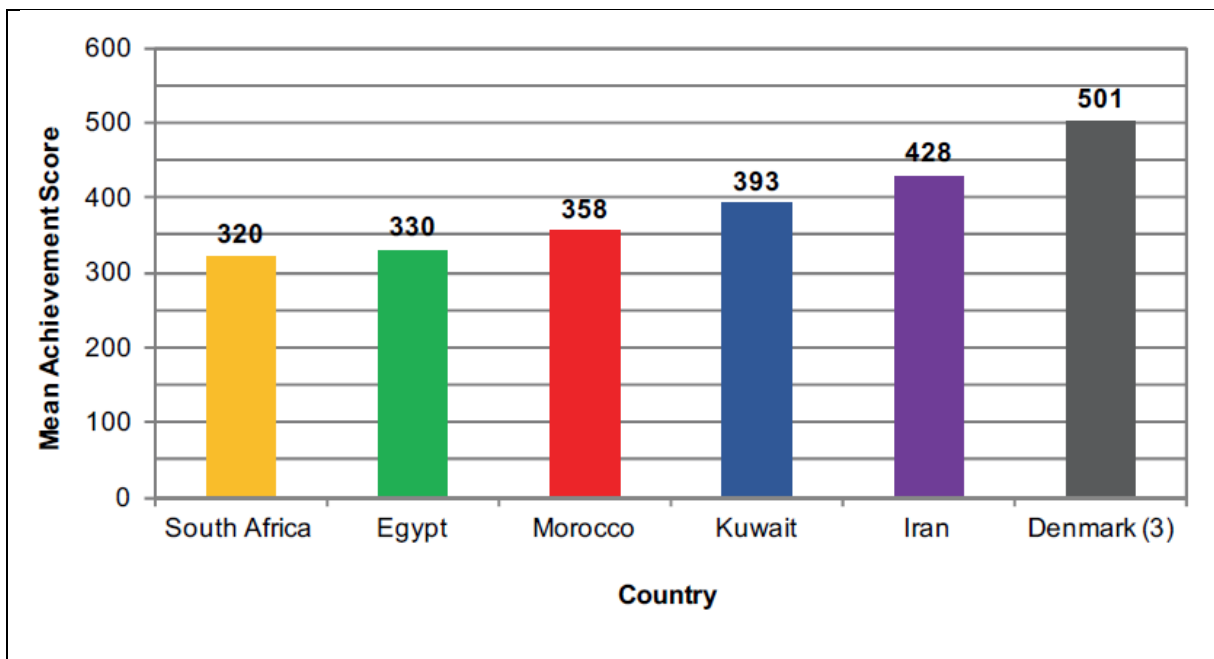
Figure 2.6: South African Grade 4 learner achievement compared to other countries participating in PIRLS Literacy 2016 (PIRLS, 2016:2)

Furthermore, Howie at al. (2016:60) found that the results revealed that, of the six countries that participated in the PIRLS Literacy 2016, South Africa achieved 320 points, which was the lowest score. All 11 official languages were assessed, but none of these languages attained the international centre point of 500. It is evident that, just as in all other languages, South African English Home Language learners are struggling with reading in Grade 4.

The PIRLS assessment does not aim to highlight how poorly South African schools progress in reading; it offers more benefits than drawbacks (PIRLS, 2016:1). The PIRLS assessment objective is to offer recommendations about how to improve teaching and learning and to assist learners to become proficient and confident readers. "The PIRLS 2016 assessment is based upon the PIRLS 2016 Assessment Framework based on two overarching purposes for reading, namely: the literary experience and to acquire and use information" (PIRLS, 2016:1). Four comprehension processes are assessed: focus on and retrieve explicitly stated information, make straightforward inferences, interpret and integrate ideas and information, and evaluate and contribute content and textual elements (Howie et al., 2016).

South Africa has participated in PIRLS assessments three times in a five-year cycle, and for every year that they participated, they achieved one of the lowest results comparatively. This should be a cause for great concern, since a child who cannot read, is unable to learn. Most recently, South Africa participated in the PIRLS 2021 assessment. The results found that 81% of Grade 4 learners could not read for meaning in any language, as all 11 languages were assessed, which was an increase from 78% in 2016.

Grade 4 learners participated in PIRLS 2021 across the 11 official language, where English was also assessed. SA's PIRLS score decreased from 320 in 2016 to 288 in 2021. Internationally, South Africa performed the lowest in comparison to the other countries that participated in PIRLS 2021 (DBE, 2023:4).
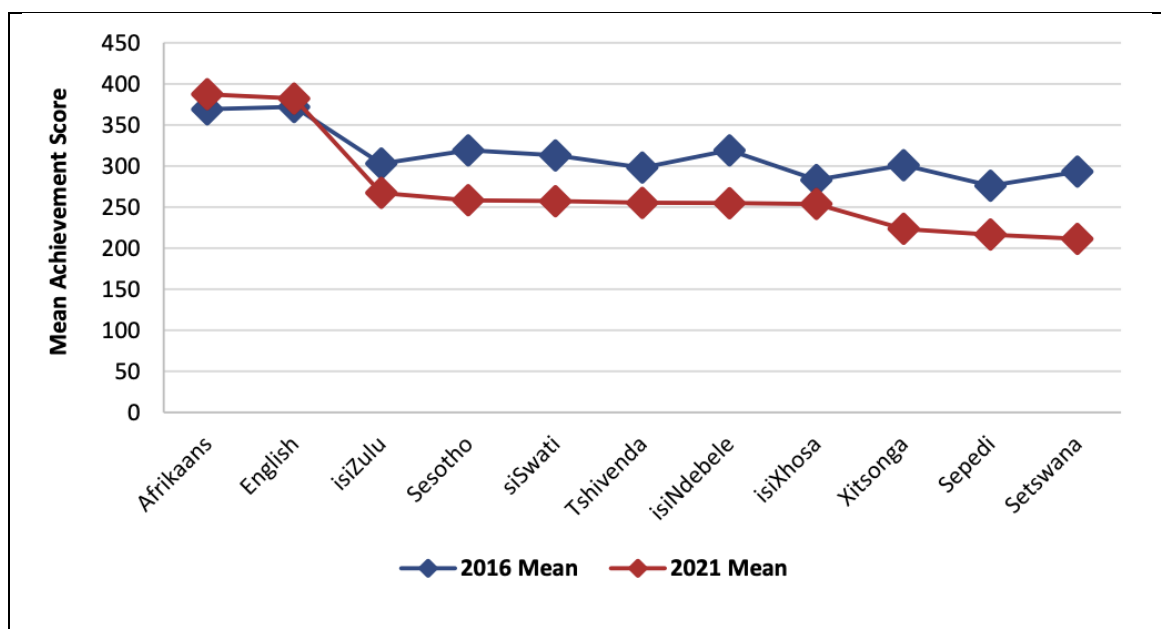
Figure 2.7: Trends in Grade 4 achievement across PIRLS 2016 and PIRLS 2021 cycles by language

Learners who wrote the PIRLS assessment in English performed higher on the 2021 assessment in comparison to 2019. Although the increased results were not significantly high, the growth between the two cycles was negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, South Africa has participated in PIRLS literacy multiple times and, with each result, South Africa was one of the lowest performing countries. Reports have been written to illustrate these findings and also discussed what learners struggled with in the test. The reports identified challenges that influenced the poor literacy performance in South Africa. However, international standardised test should not be the only measure of learners' literacy skills. These tests do not test all learners' abilities and learning styles; they neglect the various talents and strengths of individual learners.

2.8.2 Annual National Assessments

The Annual National Assessments are standardised national assessments for languages and mathematics in the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6) and in literacy and numeracy for the Foundation Phase (Grades 1–3), which were established in 2011 and had their inception in 2012 (DBE, 2011a; b).

There are two types of the ANAS, known as the following:

Universal ANA – all learners attending government schools (including state-subsidised independent schools) write the ANAs. Teachers invigilate in the school and teachers in the school mark the assessments.

Verification ANA – A nationally-representative sample of schools are randomly selected where there are additional moderating/verifying procedures conducted at Grades 3, 6 and 9 by an independent agent. In the past this has been conducted by the HSRC (2011) and Deloitte (2013) (Spaull, 2015:2). The Annual National Assessments for Grade 4 English Home Language in 2013 consisted of a comprehension test based on a story, an information text and a menu, and it was found that there was a lack of understanding of the text such as identifying the main idea and details of the text (DBE, 2014:71). Second, there was an inability to analyse a text and to identify the message of a text, and finally, there was difficulty in the expression of opinion and feeling regarding the text (DBE, 2013:86). In the ANA 2014, a more detailed analysis was conducted for Grade 4 English Home Language nationally. Figure 2.7 shows that the score most frequently obtained by learners was 76% (DBE, 2014:57).
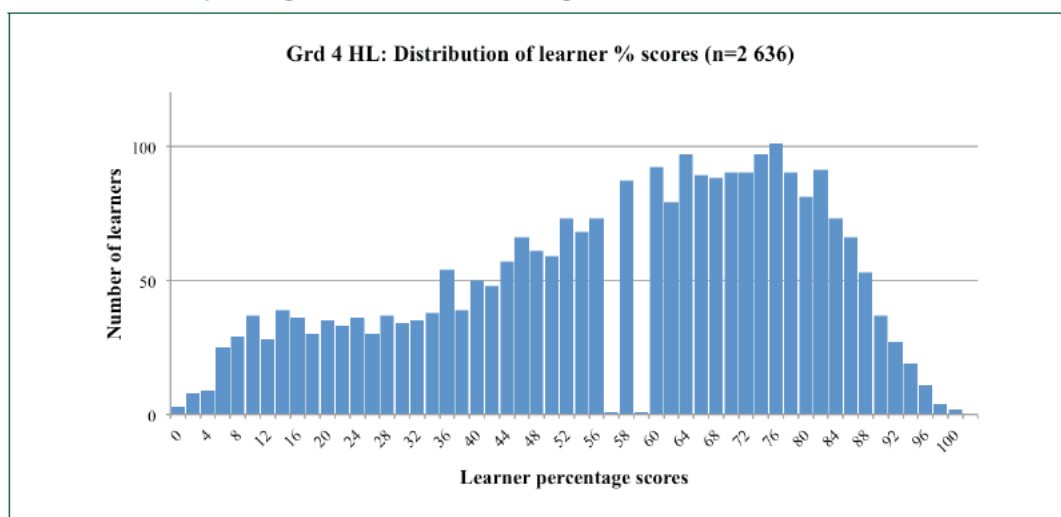
Figure 2.7: Distribution of Grade 4 learner scores in English Home Language (DBE, 2014)

Figure 2.7 illustrates the Grade 4 learners' percentage scores in English Home Language. Figure 2.7 shows that learners' scores ranged from 0% to 100% and that the modal score (the score most frequently obtained by learners) was 76% (DBE, 2014:56).The average national percentage results for Grade 4 from 2012 to 2014 for Home Language (HL) and First Additional Language (FAL) were captured as seen in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Average national percentage for languages results for Grade 4 from 2012 to 2014 (DBE, 2014:8)

	Home language	First additional language
2012	43%	34%
2013	49%	39%
2014	57%	41%

2.9 Reading intervention programmes

Reading intervention programmes have become a common means to attempt to address the issue of learners who are unable to read in the early grades (Kelly & Graham, 2018:2). Kika et al. (2022:17) state that different reading initiatives, strategies, interventions and policy documents which focus primarily on attempting to improve reading in the Foundation Phase (Grade 1–3) have been launched by both the national and some provincial education departments in South Africa since 2006. Kelly and Graham (2018:3) define Early Grades Reading interventions as programmes that intend to reinforce core reading skills in Grade 1

through 4 by training teachers to teach reading using simplified instructions and research-based curricula, and by using a combination of complementary approaches.

Since the PIRLS 2021 results were published, there has been more focus on improving reading and several initiatives were organised for teaching reading and for improving reading skills. One of these include the Read to Lead and Drop All and Read, where schools were urged to make specific time to engage in a reading activity at least once a week (Van Staden & Roux, 2022:9).

2.10 Challenges to teaching reading in Grade 4

There are various factors that contribute to the literacy crisis in South Africa. In order to identify the causes of the poor literacy rate in South Africa, one needs to determine what is happening in the classroom. The National Reading Strategy (DBE, 2008:4) states that South Africa faces many challenges in promoting literacy.

In the South African educational context, there are challenges faced by Grade 4 teachers that have consequences for the teaching of reading. PIRLS literacy (2016) identified various factors which contributed to the reading performance of South African learners, including the school environment, socioeconomic background and the learners' motivation. The section that follows discusses some of the challenges faced by teachers in the South African educational context.

2.10.1 Under-resourced schools

The PIRLS Report (Howie et al., 2016:11) found that learners living in less developed communities achieved the lowest reading literacy achievement in the PIRLS Literacy 2016 study. The poor performance of these learners could be due to a lack of resources such as reading materials. Second, schools may not have libraries for learners to acquire reading books.

Butler (2017:44) states that South African learners coming from underprivileged communities also attend poorly resourced schools with poor infrastructure. The National Reading Strategy (DBE, 2008:8) states that limited facilities and poor conditions for teaching and learning, such as poor instructional resources, make it more difficult to provide a quality education. Chetty (2019:249) conducted a study and found that there were schools which lacked proper libraries for the needs of primary school learners and did not offer a system in which learners could borrow books to take home. Learners who came from schools with no libraries achieved significantly lower than those with school libraries in the PIRLS Literacy 2016 test (Howie et al., 2016:11) The lack of reading resources hindered the progress in literacy among learners.

Another issue present in schools is overcrowding. Many schools have an uneven teacher to learner ratio, which hinders the teachers' ability to pay special attention to learners who

genuinely struggle to read. In a study conducted by Fesi and Mncube (2021:5), it was found that overcrowded classrooms hindered the teachers' ability to develop their potential in teaching English reading owing to the big classes. Hoadley (2022:31) found that the monitoring and support of teachers, teachers' low expectations of their learners, loss of instructional time owing to teacher absenteeism from school and during lessons, and finally, a lack of exposure to books at home are most likely contributing to South Africa's literacy crisis.

2.10.2 National Language in Education Policy

One of the main challenges and reasons for the poor literacy performance in South Africa is the result of the National Language in Education Policy, which was established in 1997, to correct the apartheid inequalities of the past. The following section discusses the history, aims and issues in implementing the language policy in South Africa.

The National Language in Education Policy (DBE, 1997:1) aims to give equal status to all 11 official languages: Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa, IsiZulu, IsiNdebele, SiSwati, Setswana, Sesotho, Sepedi, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. The NiLP policy promotes using home languages as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). The policy requires learners to be exposed to an additional language, while being taught in the home language up to Grade 3. Once learners reach Grade 4, they transition from being taught and learning in their home languages to having English as the language of instruction (Phala & Hugo, 2016:170). Pretorius (2014:53) states that Grade 4 represents a shift in which the teaching focus changes from learning how to read to reading to learn.

Since learners are often learning in a language that is not their home language, this poses a language issue causing poor comprehension (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016:11). According to Butler (2017:42), when learners learn in a language that is not their home language, there is poor communication between learners and teachers in the LoLT. Most primary school learners do not speak English at home since they communicate in their mother tongue, which may be a different African language from the 11 official languages (Fesi & Mncube, 2021:2). If a learner's home language is isiXhosa from Grade R3ζ and they are only exposed to English Home Language in Grade 4 as a medium of instruction, there will be a language barrier as this is a new language they are grasping. This can result in poor reading performance. According to Phala and Hugo (2016:170), when learners reach Grade 4 they are expected to have developed reading sufficient abilities to be able to learn, which makes Grade 4 a challenging grade. Naidoo et al. (2014:158) state that learners who are not proficient in their language of instruction, English in the case of learners who transition in Grade 4, will experience barriers to learning a second language.

The shift from mother tongue education to English as LoLT in Grade 4 is a huge obstacle as many learners are incapable of or are struggling to read and write in English at Grade 4 level

(Fesi & Mncube, 2021:6). Pretorius (2014:53) states that this transition in Grade 4 is a complex process when learners already have reading or learning difficulties. According to a study conducted by Denton, Romylos & Uys, (2024:192), when English is not a learner's mother tongue or language spoken at home, this is a challenge since code-switching is not always possible as teachers often have more than one language represented in their classrooms. The PIRLS cycles have revealed that there has been improved achievement by learners for whom the language of testing was similar to their home language, including a better achievement when the language of the test was often spoken at home (Combrinck & Van Staden, 2023:187).

The National Language in Education Policy attempts to ensure that all 11 official languages in South Africa are represented in education. This is done through learners' LoLT or through having it as an additional language. However, this poses a challenge as learners' LoLT often differs from their mother tongue, which contributes to the poor literacy rate.

2.11 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: 3 Foundation Phase

Education in South Africa is guided by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which was established in 2011. CAPS focuses on learners becoming proficient in at least two languages. All learners are expected to learn a language on a "home language level and at least one additional official language". The Foundation Phase (Grade 1–3) CAPS document states that the five components of reading: phonemic awareness; word recognition, which includes sight words and phonics; comprehension; vocabulary; and fluency needs to be taught and practised daily (DBE, 2011a:14). When learners reach Grade 4, it is expected that they are able to apply these five reading skills since they have to use these skills to gain knowledge (Denton et al., 2024:186). According to Marais and Wessels (2020:1), teachers only consult the EHL curriculum document as a guideline for the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase, and found that the document does not offer explicit guidance on how reading should be taught.

There is no mutual agreement and shared vision of what reading success in different languages is viewed as in the Foundation Phase, and this results in low teacher expectations. There might be a direct correlation between the Foundation Phase and poor reading performance in the Intermediate Phase. According to Hugo (2011:133), it appears that the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase is not effective as learners cannot read with understanding when they reach the Intermediate Phase. The Foundation Phase aims to equip learners with the necessary reading skills to become successful readers.

Despite reading experts' agreement on the five most important components involved in the teaching of reading, the reading guidelines offered to Grade 3ζ teachers are not void of criticism. A study conducted by Verbeek (2011:1) found that almost the entire focus was

applied to the use of phonic cues out of the context of the whole text and states that this over-emphasis on phonemic awareness prevents the development of reading for meaning, specifically in the early years of school. Hugo (2011:140) states that only using the phonics method to learn to read delays the whole reading process, which leads to failure to understand what has been read. Another factor contributing to the low literacy levels is the oral-based practices in teaching and learning. Govender and Hugo (2018) conducted a study of teachers' perceptions of the Foundation Phase CAPS document. They found that the phonics in the CAPS document lacked structure. Second, there were numerous assessments that needed to be completed which was a challenge for teachers and learners. Finally, the CAPS document fails to provide teachers with enough time to teach children how to read successfully (Govender & Hugo, 2018:29)

This may be one of the main causes of poor reading and comprehension among South African school learners. Therefore, Grade 4 teachers may receive learners who are not sufficient readers as their foundation was not laid well. However, the reading component in the curriculum does acknowledge the significance of sufficient reading skills for effective learning to occur across the curriculum.

2.11.1 Socioeconomic status

The PIRLS Literacy Study found that 75% of learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds (PIRLS, 2016:94). Socioeconomic status is typically measured by income, educational level, employment and living conditions (Dolean et al., 2019:1). Socioeconomic status refers to how much an individual earns, how many years of education they have received, whether they are employed or unemployed and in what state they live. Tuell (2:2021) states that low socioeconomic status affects an individual's health, physically and mentally, which influences the cognitive development of learners. Stats SA uses the following indicators for monitoring living conditions in South Africa:

- Living in formal housing;
- Access to electricity for lighting;
- Level of education of the household head;
- Average household size (Udjo et al., 2000:4).

Although there are multiple factors that may contribute to low literacy performance in children, their home situation may influence their ability to read successfully. This statement agrees with research done by Butler (2017:78), which found that learners who came from adverse backgrounds consisting of a lack of resources and limited parental involvement, contributed to the failed reading achievement and learning ability of learners. This is disadvantageous regarding learners' reading comprehension (Tuell, 2021:2).

Phala and Hugo (2016:179) state that all parties should be involved in learners' reading practices in order to improve their reading ability. However, this may not occur when learners come from households in which parents themselves cannot read with comprehension as parents may have a history of dropping out of school early or of not succeeding at school. In the South African context, learners often come from households in which their parents did not complete their schooling owing to dropping out, teenage pregnancy, or for other reasons. If a child comes from a low-income household, their parents may be unable to provide them with additional reading material owing to financial constraints, leading to a lack of exposure to reading. Chetty (2019:252) expanded on parental involvement correlating with learner success. There are various descriptions of what parental involvement is: essentially, it entails that parents become involved in the child's development, which includes emotionally, physically, and in their education.

A study by Chetty (2019:252) found that parental and community problems together with schools with limited resources are factors that contribute to learners struggling to read. Multiple studies have been conducted on the impact of parental involvement on children's reading ability. According to Gulas (2010:3), parental involvement can be defined as "parents volunteering in schools and parent input at home" and parental involvement plays an important role in the learning process as parents are stakeholders in their children's academic progress. Parental involvement in reading activities has a positive effect on students' reading comprehension levels (Çalışkan & Ulaş, 2022:513). Bendanillo (2021:94) states that parents need to reinforce what has been developed and learnt in the school.

It is evident that parental involvement has an impact on learners' academic success. Therefore, it can be said that parents need to become more actively involved in the learners' learning process when learning to read. This may resolve or assist in preventing poor performance in learners' reading ability.

2.11.2 Motivation to read

Motivation to learn may play a key role in learners' reading ability. Borah (2021:550) defines motivation "as an inspiration that propels someone into an action." Motivation can be seen as the reason for doing something and what drives one to succeed. Reading motivation is a vital aspect which supports students to read more, and it has an important relationship with reading and understanding texts (Ahmadi et al., 2013:10). Furthermore, reading motivation entails seeing value, interest and a desire to read (Duke & Cartwright, 2021:35).

Learners may be driven to learn by two sources, namely internal motivation and external motivation, which is based on self-determination theory (Borah, 2021:550). Internal motivation is defined as inner desire and internal needs, and external motivation refers to the reward an individual will receive owing to any intentional actions (Ahmadi, 2013:11). For instance, if they

choose to read because they find reading interesting or enjoy it, this is viewed as internal motivation. However, if they read to improve their results or to gain recognition or praise from their parents, this is viewed as external motivation (McGeown, 2013:3).

Le Cordeur (2010:80) asserts that one of the reasons for struggling readers' lack of achievement is due to a lack of motivation to read. The PIRLS (2011) found that there was a direct correlation between motivation and high achievement, as learners in Grade 4 who enjoyed reading were motivated to do so and were confident readers. These learners achieved higher scores than their counterparts who did not like reading and were not motivated or confident in their reading. Wigfield et al. (2016:4) state that "when students believe they are efficacious at a given activity such as reading, they perform more optimally". If a learner realises they are struggling to read and constantly making errors, they may feel despondent and fail at attempting to improve their reading skills. Teachers need to identify various ways to engage and motivate their learners. Smith (2024:10) states that teachers should know what learners' interests are with the goal of providing learners with reading material that is suited to their interests

Busakwe (2021:41) recommends that schools should provide books that are relevant to the school context to stimulate learners to find an interest in reading. Smith (2024:11) adds that, without motivation, learners will spend less time reading, which provides less opportunity to master literacy skills. A study conducted by Busakwe (2021:40) found that interest influences reading achievement and learners who found the books they read interesting achieved higher comprehension scores in comprehension tasks, which equated to higher reading competencies.

In this section an overview was given of the challenges present in the South African educational context. This included under-resourced schools; the National Language Policy, which dictates that learners learn in their mother tongue from Grade R until Grade 3 and transition to English Home Language as their Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT); learners that come from disadvantaged backgrounds who cannot read proficiently; and learners' motivation. All of these challenges are key factors in answering why learners struggle to read.

2.12 Teacher training

South African universities offer qualifications in teaching, such as bachelor's degrees in Education (BEd) in the Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Further Education and Training, which are four-year courses. Students can decide which phase they would like to follow, upon applying. Second, a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) is available for students who have already completed a qualification. The PGCE is offered as a one-year course. These courses equip and train teachers theoretically and practically for the teaching

profession. Teachers play a vital role to develop reading literacy. Teachers should be trained how to teach reading. Butler (2017:35) states that this requires that teachers must have knowledge about literacy theories and practices. In order to apply the curriculum successfully, teachers require training, and in order to assess teachers' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum, it requires evaluating the training programmes they undergo to apply the curriculum (Makeleni & Sethusha, 2014:108). However, according to the National Reading Strategy (DBE, 2008:8) multiple South African teachers have a limited perception of teaching literacy and reading.

Research in South Africa indicates that the current pre-service teacher training curriculum is inadequate to prepare teachers to teach reading effectively in the earlier grades (Steinke & Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2021:37). "This lack of preparedness results in teachers who continue to use outdated, traditional teaching methods with their learners" (Steinke & Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2021:37). Pretorius & Klapwijk (2016:1) found that numerous teachers do not immerse themselves in rich reading practices and do not seem to possess a clear understanding of reading concepts, reading development, and reading methodology. Furthermore, a study by Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016:4) found that effective literacy instruction is associated with teachers' own reading practices. If teachers want to promote successful literacy skills in their learners, they themselves need to be successful readers and to be informed about reading and books. Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016:4) state that "teachers' perceptions of reading and their own reading practices may also be contributory factors to learners' low literacy levels".

Endeavours to enhance reading performance are hindered by poor teacher training, which results in poor content and pedagogical content knowledge about early literacy development (Pretorius, 2022:3). A study conducted by Mather and Land (2014:208) found that teachers were not made aware of specific methods in which they were trained to teach reading and if they were made aware of any methods, there was a lack of discourse to explain what those methods entailed.

To address the poor teacher professional development and lack of involvement in professional development activities, the Department of Basic Education established and implemented the Integrated Quality Management System in 2003 (Van Staden & Roux, 2021:7). The IQMS was rebranded to the Quality Management System and is a performance management system for school-based educators, created to evaluate the performance levels of teachers in order to achieve high levels of school performance (DBE, 2013:4). According to Mulaudzi (2024:362), continuous professional development opportunities that prioritise evidence-based instructional methods and assessment strategies are vital to empower teachers in their reading instruction journey.

Teachers are trained and prepared when they are at university. However, teachers need to continue upskilling themselves and broadening their knowledge to improve their pedagogies. This can be achieved through ongoing professional development.

2.13 Reading guidelines in the CAPS document

The South African Department of Basic Education Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (DBE, 2011b) offers guidelines on how reading should be taught. Hugo (2021:30) found that the Grade 4 CAPS document motivates teachers to improve upon the foundation for reading created in Grades R–3 (CAPS, 2011a:12). The CAPS document states that Grade 4 learners need to spend five hours per week reading. The document offers guidelines to teachers under the heading Reading and Viewing, and the content column in the document indicates which literature genre has to be read, and provides reading and viewing strategies such as summarising, skimming, scanning, inferring, visualisation, rereading and drawing conclusions (DBE, 2011a:17). Furthermore, Hugo (2021:30) states that the CAPS document for Grade 4–6 highlights the importance of comprehension in reading.

A study of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy for Grade 4–7 conducted by Winberg et al. (2020:9), found that CAPS fails to supply sufficient guidance for improving reading and that the "prescribed programme of assessment is not supported by the research literature on reading". This means simply that the CAPS document does not apply the recommendations from research literature on reading to the curriculum itself. If the advice from research literature were followed, it could possibly improve reading in the Intermediate Phase.

Williams (2019:2) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of implementing the Grade 4 English Home Language curriculum and found that, despite the transparency of the policy, the participants stated that the implementation of the EHL curriculum policy itself was a challenge since the EHL curriculum was too vast (Williams, 2019:68).

Overall, the CAPS document does offer guidelines on how to teach reading. However, the implementation of these guidelines proves to be a challenge as the EHL curriculum is not very specific.

The literature review explored key concepts related to teaching reading to Grade 4 English Home Language learners in South Africa. It began by defining reading and its two core components: decoding and comprehension. Various reading models—bottom-up, top-down, and interactive—were examined to highlight different approaches to teaching reading. The review discussed essential reading strategies such as activating prior knowledge, prediction, and monitoring comprehension, which support reading with understanding. It outlined the phases of reading instruction (pre-, during-, and post-reading) and teaching methods,

contrasting teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches. Techniques like reading aloud, skimming, and scanning were described as tools to enhance reading skills. Lastly, the literature situated the study within the South African literacy context, emphasizing the persistent reading challenges revealed by international assessments like PIRLS, and the impact of language transitions on learners' reading proficiency.

2.14 Theoretical framework

This study was guided by the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) framework. According to Liu (2013:128), this is specific knowledge used exclusively by teachers. Shulman introduced the pedagogical content knowledge framework in the 1980s (Shulman, 1986:9), defining PCK as follows: "The category of pedagogical content knowledge includes the most regularly taught topics in one's subject area." Pedagogical content knowledge is having knowledge of how to teach specific topics effectively. It incorporates knowledge of the subject matter with knowledge of teaching methods, so that difficult topics can be made comprehensible and engaging for learners. It includes knowing what makes a subject difficult or easy to learn and selecting the most effective way to explain it. Teachers need to know various techniques to teach reading. They need to be able to adapt their teaching style to suit the needs of especially struggling readers, to keep the background of the learners in mind, and to adapt their lessons accordingly.

The basis of PCK is assumed to be the merging of teachers' pedagogy and understanding of content such that it affects their teaching in ways that will generate learners' learning understanding (Van Driel & Berry, 2010:656). Sing et al. (2015:40) agree with this assertion that PCK integrates or joins pedagogy and content, which essentially covers 'what' to teach and 'how' to teach.

Shulman (1986) states that PCK incorporates an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult, and that it involves the ideas and preconceptions that diverse learners bring with them to the learning of those frequently taught topics and lessons. Shulman (1986) argues that possessing subject knowledge is not sufficient to teach and that teachers need to possess pedagogical content knowledge too (Ibrahim, 2016:159).

According to Yilmaz (2011:204), teachers should possess both "subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge and skills to be able to effectively accomplish their subject's goals." Therefore, it is important that teachers have a broad knowledge of their teaching subject and how to teach it. Hence, the theory of pedagogical content knowledge is suitable for this case study as the study aims to determine the knowledge teachers possess regarding how to teach reading.

Sajeena (2021:323) states that PCK is having knowledge of what, when, why and how to teach, utilising a range of knowledge of good teaching practice and experience. Furthermore, Sajeena

(2021:323) postulates that PCK necessitates an understanding of where learners are coming from in regard to the subject being taught. Teachers with adequate pedagogical content knowledge must have a good grasp of which facets of their subjects are commonly easy for learners and which are generally more difficult.

Baxter and Lederman (1999:148) assert that, by definition, pedagogical content knowledge cannot be observed directly and that pedagogical content knowledge is partially an internal construct. Furthermore, Baxter and Lederman (1999:148) argue that another drawback of pedagogical content knowledge is that it is normally time-consuming to develop, conduct and examine. The majority of assessments of pedagogical content knowledge are qualitative in essence, depending on cognitive techniques, such as interviews. According to Butler (2017:37), pedagogical content knowledge requires that teachers have knowledge of the strategies they need to apply to teach their subject content to learners effectively. In the context of the language teacher, the teacher needs to be aware of reading strategies for comprehending texts and to have knowledge of techniques to teach reading in order to apply it in their pedagogies. Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016:4) state that, in order for teachers to be effective reading teachers, they need knowledge about reading and how to teach reading. Second, teachers need to be avid and skilled readers themselves. Teachers need to be proficient readers too before they can teach students how to become proficient readers.

Pedagogical content knowledge entails that teachers have knowledge of their subject matter and knowledge on how to teach that specific subject matter. In the case of English Home Language teachers, they should have knowledge of how learners learn to read and how they can teach learners to read effectively.

2.15 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the literature consulted defined what reading is. Reading is broken down into two components, i.e., decoding and language comprehension. These two components need to be combined to develop skilled readers. This section discussed models of reading, which included the top-down model, which described lessons as being more teacher centred where teachers lead and have control of the whole lesson, and the bottom-up model in which learners have choice and autonomy during the lesson, and finally, the interactive model which combines both of these learning models.

This chapter also explained various reading strategies that can be employed during the reading process, which include activation of prior knowledge, skimming, and prediction. Strategies such as the activation of prior knowledge and prediction allow the learner to engage with the text more and to gain a greater understanding of the reading text.

In addition, the literature included South Africa's performance in international tests such as in the PIRLS Literacy Test for 2006, 2011 and 2016, which was discussed with graphs illustrating South Africa's performance in comparison to other countries. It was revealed that South African learners in Grade 4 performed the worst compared to other countries who participated, which is alarming and established that South Africa has a literacy crisis.

The challenges that may have contributed to South Africa's poor performance were also discussed. These challenges included under-resourced schools where schools did not have libraries or enough reading material. Second, learners' motivation was a cause for concern as learners who struggle to read tend to be less motivated compared to their peers who are able to read and who are more motivated to engage in reading. The socioeconomic status of learners also impacts their reading ability, as learners who come from poor backgrounds tend to have limited access to reading resources. The literature also included an explanation of the National Language Policy in education in South Africa, which mandates that learners learn in their mother tongue from Grade R–3 and transition to English Home Language in Grade 4. Last, this chapter studied what the national curriculum advises regarding teaching reading, specifically the Intermediate Phase CAPS document. Furthermore, this section discussed the literature on teacher's training.

Finally, the framework being used for this study was discussed. Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) is central to this study as it focuses on the specific knowledge teachers need to effectively teach reading to Grade 4 learners. PCK involves understanding both the content (reading skills, strategies, and models) and how to teach that content in ways that are accessible and meaningful to learners. This study examined how teachers integrate their knowledge of reading theories and practical teaching methods to address learners' diverse reading needs, especially within the South African context where language transitions and literacy challenges are prevalent. By exploring teachers' PCK, the study aimed to uncover how their instructional decisions impact learners' reading comprehension and overall literacy development.

Chapter Three will explain the research design, research methodology, data collection and data analysis employed to answer the research questions. Pertaining to how teachers teach reading in Grade 4 English Home Language.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to explain the research design, methodology and research paradigm that were employed in this study. The main research question focuses on how teachers teach reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. Chapter 3 also explains the data collection process for this study in detail. Furthermore, this chapter accounts for the use of the selected methods. Last, this section discusses the trustworthiness and the ethical considerations for this study.

This study takes a qualitative approach. Haradhan (2018:2) defines qualitative research as a form of social action where the researcher interprets participants' actions and makes sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of individuals. Furthermore, a case study design was employed, as this study aimed to identify how teachers teach reading in Grade 4 English Home Language.These sections are to be explained in a narrative please! Not numbering

The chapter is divided into sections explaining the various steps followed in the data collection:

> 3.2 Research design
> 3.3 Research methodology
> 3.4 Data collection methods
> 3.5 Data analysis,
> 3.7 Trustworthiness
> 3.8 Ethical considerations
> 3.9 Contributions of the study

The contents of this chapter are illustrated in Figure 3.1, which displays the sequence of the study and acts as a visual representation of the procedures that were followed to obtain the findings.
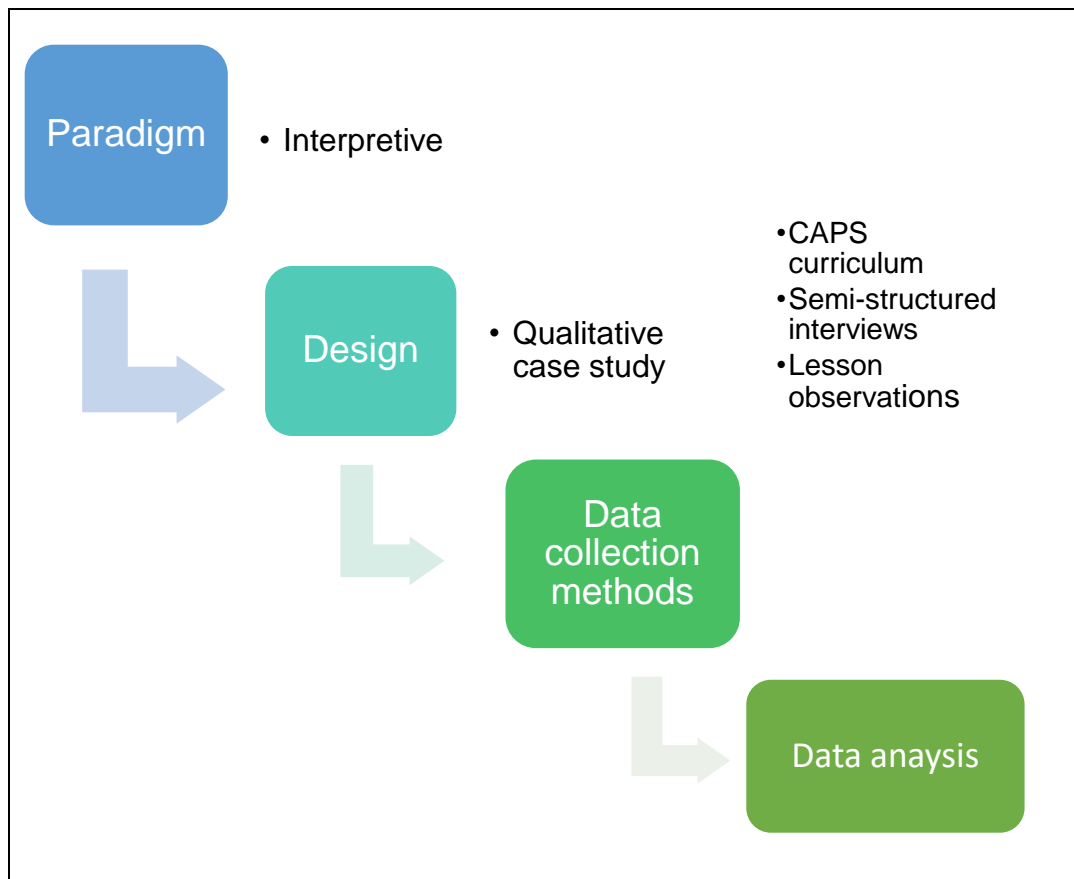
Figure 3.1: Conceptual diagram of this study

3.2 Research paradigm and design

This study is underpinned by a constructivist ontology, which recognises that the reality of reading instruction is socially constructed by teachers and learners within their specific contexts. From an interpretivist epistemology, this study seeks to understand the meanings and knowledge that teachers generate through their experiences and practices in English Home Language classrooms. Consequently, the research design is qualitative, employing semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis to capture rich, subjective data. This approach aligns with the view that knowledge about reading instruction is best gained through understanding participants' perspectives within their contextual realities.

This study used an interpretive paradigm. According to Rehman and Alharthi (2016:55), the interpretive paradigm aims to "understand the interpretations of individuals about the social phenomena they interact with". The research investigated how teachers teach reading. The researcher observed teachers in their classes to gain first-hand information about their teaching experiences. The researcher used an observation schedule during these lesson observations which focused on the resources teachers had, the technology used, and the teaching pedagogies utilised by teachers when teaching reading.

Creswell (2009:22) defines research design as "plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis". This study utilised a qualitative design. The qualitative approach is considered applicable, since the researcher had to observe the teaching and learning process to gain insight into how teachers taught reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. Creswell & Creswell (2018:4) explains that qualitative research is a method "for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem". Furthermore, the research design provides the necessary framework for research and guides all future steps to achieve the research aims (Mukherjee, 2019:8).

Data were obtained through the thematic analysis of documents from education policymakers, responses to interviews and lesson observations. This qualitative study answered the research question and sub-questions by studying the research participants in their teaching domain, the classroom. The researcher was required to attend one lesson of each participant, to listen and observe the teaching and learning process related to reading.

There are several types of case studies, each with its own format and distinct purpose. Often, researchers use exploratory case studies when they are starting research and want to become familiar with a topic or shape their research questions (Yin, 2018:37). Descriptive case studies, alternatively, aim to create a concise description of a case within its real-world setting, often using specific theories as a guide (Merriam, 2009:43). When researchers want to explore reasons behind certain events or processes, they turn to explanatory case studies, which help answer complex "how" and "why" questions (Yin, 2018:15). There are also intrinsic case studies, chosen because something about the case itself deeply interests the researcher. In contrast, instrumental case studies use a particular case to clarify a broader issue (Stake, 1995:4). Finally, multiple or collective case studies involve looking at several cases concurrently, assisting researchers to identify patterns and common themes (Stake, 1995:5). This study examined how teachers approach teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language by using a descriptive case study design. This approach was chosen because it allowed for a rich, detailed exploration of what actually happens in classrooms, considering the unique context of a South African school. By focusing on real teaching practices, methods, and the factors that influence them, the study aimed to shed light on how reading is taught on a day-to-day basis. The case was not picked for being unusual, but rather for its ability to help understand a much bigger issue: the country's ongoing reading challenges. Through examining the everyday experiences of teachers and learners, the study hoped to provide valuable insights into how reading instruction can be improved across South Africa.

3.2.1 Research questions

The main research question for this study is:

1.   How is reading currently taught in Grade 4 English Home Language?

The sub-questions considered are:

1.1.   What guidelines for teaching reading are recommended by the Western Cape Education Department for Grade 4 English Home Language?

1.2.   What are the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language?

1.3.   How do teachers assist struggling readers?

3.3. Research methodology

The section that follows defines the methods that were used in the research process pertaining to how teachers taught reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. The research methodology includes the site selection, participant selection, data sets, and the data analysis.

3.3.1 Site selection

Creswell (2003:165) stated that "gaining entry to a research site and the ethical issues that might arise are also elements of the researcher's role". The researcher contacted the schools via email and telephonically to express her interest in conducting research at the two schools in the study. The researcher sought permission from the Western Cape Education Department to conduct the research at these two schools. The researcher chose School A as it was close to where she lived. Second, the researcher chose School B as she had heard an interview with the school's deputy principal regarding the school offering teachers training on how to teach reading and thought it would be an ideal site as teachers from this school had received additional training from the school on how to teach reading.

This research was conducted at a public school in the Metro North District of Cape Town (School A) and a former Model C school in the Metro East district in the Western Cape (School B). English Home Language is offered to learners at both schools. A former Model C school refers to schools that were previously designated for white individuals only under the Apartheid government in South Africa (before 1994). The learners in School A come from the surrounding areas, which is home to underprivileged communities, in comparison to School B in the Metro East District where the learners come from a more privileged background. Both schools have good infrastructure and are well-staffed.

South African schools are classified into five quintiles. Quintiles one, two and three are no-fee-paying schools in the poor areas, while quintile four and five are fee-paying schools. The public

school (School A) in the study falls within quintile three because it is a no-fee-paying school, since it is situated in a less affluent area in Cape Town. The former Model C school (School B) falls within the quintile four category. Quintile classification is done according to the level of poverty of the community surrounding the school.

These schools were purposefully selected out of convenience to study the teaching of reading by teachers at both schools in order to determine whether the teaching practices at either school have a direct influence on learners' reading performance.

The schools are referred to as School A and School B in this study in order to protect the identity of the schools and of the participants. In both schools the researcher could only observe each teacher once owing to time constraints and the pace of the curriculum they were following at the time.

3.2.2 Participant selection

The participants selected for this study were teachers from each school in Grade 4 English Home Language: three teachers from School A and five teachers from School B. Participants from School A were referred to as Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3. From School B participants were referred to as Teacher 4, Teacher 5, Teacher 6, Teacher 7, and Teacher 8. The initial plan was to interview four teachers at School A; however, one of the teachers had passed away.

The researcher visited School A first. The procedure was explained to the participants, who were informed that they were not obliged to participate in the study. They were free to discontinue their participation at any time if there were any reasons not to participate. All teachers participated until the end of the study.

3.3 Data collection

Data collection is an important aspect of research design and of achieving one's research aims. Answering the research questions depends on the effectiveness of data collection (Adams et al., 2014:92). The data collection is the process undertaken to find answers to one's research questions.

The section that follows outlines the chosen data collection for this study. This includes document analysis, interviews, and lesson observations. Various datasets were used to ensure thorough and accurate answers to the research question and in an attempt at data triangulation. According to Flick (2014:178), triangulation is defined as the observation of the research problem from at least two different perspectives. The following datasets were used in this study:

3.3.1 Dataset 1: Document collection

The Department of Basic Education Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document and the Adjusted Teaching Plan (ATP) for English Home Language in the Intermediate Phase were analysed regarding the strategies recommended to teach reading skills in Grade 4. Finally, the Western Cape Reading Norms and Strategies 2020–2025 document was analysed. The CAPS document and the ATP were downloaded from the Department of Basic Education official website. The Western Cape Reading Norms and Strategies 2020–2025 document was downloaded from the Western Cape Education Department official website. These documents are available freely to the public.

3.3.2 Dataset 2: Interviews with English Home Language teachers

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight teachers; three teachers from School A and five teachers from School B. The teachers were selected based on the fact that they taught Grade 4 English Home Language. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with the teachers in Term 3 in the teachers' classrooms or in the school staffroom, during their free periods at school as this was the only time that they were available and were uninterrupted. The researcher used a voice-recording application on her cell phone device to collect the interview answers from each participant. The researcher asked the participants 16 questions, which included open- and closed-ended questions. These questions consisted of information about their general teaching experience, their knowledge of reading and how they taught reading. Thereafter, the researcher transcribed these recordings into a Word Document.

3.3.3 Dataset 3: Observations of teachers in the classroom

Data were collected by observing teachers when they conducted reading lessons with Grade 4 English Home Language learners. The aim was to determine how teachers teach reading to learners and how learners responded during these reading lessons. One lesson only was observed per participant owing to time constraints. The researcher had a notebook and pen to take note of anything interesting that was observed during the lessons. The researcher had a research tool (see Appendix C) to guide the lesson observation. The researcher also aimed to identify what pedagogical content knowledge the teachers displayed about teaching reading.

3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis involves examining collected data to address research questions. After the researcher conducted the research, they analysed the data findings by means of thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2012:57) define thematic analysis as "a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set".

In this study, the researcher transcribed the interviews and typed them out in order to familiarise herself with the data. Once the data were transcribed, the researcher read each question and the responses from participants and highlighted their answers by comparing their different responses to the same questions. The researcher tabulated the responses from the interviews and identified any patterns that appeared in the responses. Thereafter, the responses were coded. The researcher analysed whether teachers had knowledge of how to teach reading; then, the researcher looked at the challenges teachers faced when teaching reading, looking for similar responses.

The researcher typed out the lesson observation field notes. These notes were also analysed and coded. Last, the researcher read and analysed the documents from policymakers (CAPS, ATPs and the WCED Reading Norms and Strategies 2020–2025 document). Once all of these datasets had been analysed, themes were established from the data. The researcher analysed these documents to determine whether there were effective guidelines regarding how to teach reading.

There are various platforms that can be used to analyse data, such as computer software or manual analysis. The researcher must have knowledge of the tool in order to analyse data. In this instance, the data were analysed manually. The data collected from interviews, lesson observations, and document analysis were analysed manually using thematic analysis. This approach involved a systematic process of familiarising myself with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts multiple times to identify meaningful patterns and recurring themes. I employed an inductive coding process, during which I assigned codes to relevant segments of the data. To enhance organisation and clarity, I used colour coding to categorise and visually differentiate the emerging themes and sub-themes. This manual thematic analysis allowed for an in-depth interpretation of the data while ensuring that categories were consistently applied across all data sources.

3.5 The researcher's position

I am a female researcher in my late 30s, a native English speaker, and identify as Coloured. My participants were predominantly female teachers, both young and middle-aged, from White and Coloured backgrounds, who spoke English or Afrikaans. I had no prior relationship with the participants or school, serving only as interviewer and observer.

While my background may have influenced how I interpreted data, the diversity of participants helped provide varied perspectives. I practiced reflexivity throughout the study to acknowledge and manage potential biases, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the research.

The researcher was not employed at either school where the research was conducted. The researcher did not know anyone at either school and had only met once with the school principals to request permission to conduct the research at the schools.

The researcher's approach was unbiased. Before conducting the research by means of interviews and observations, the reader had to set aside any preconceived notions of how she thought reading was taught. The researcher positioned herself in the teacher's domain, the classroom. The researcher was an observer during the lesson observations and did not participate during the observation process. The interviewer posed questions to the eight participants to obtain their knowledge of the topic.

3.6 Trustworthiness

This study ensured trustworthiness by addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility was achieved through triangulation of data sources – interviews, lesson observations, and document analysis – allowing themes to emerge from multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2003). The researcher repeatedly analysed transcripts and compared codes with original data to ensure accurate interpretation.

To support transferability, rich descriptions of the research context and participants were provided, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to similar settings.

Dependability was maintained by documenting all research steps clearly and keeping an audit trail, including memos on methodological decisions to promote transparency and consistency.

Finally, confirmability was ensured through reflexivity, with the researcher actively reflecting on potential biases and grounding findings firmly in the data by cross-checking codes and writing reflective notes.

These strategies collectively enhance the trustworthiness of the study's findings.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethics involves the moral issues regarding the practice of research (Mirza et.al, 2023:442). There were stakeholders who could be affected by this study. This study adhered to the ethics requirements of the Ethics Committee of the Education Faculty of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology to whom the researcher applied to the to obtain ethical clearance to conduct this study (See Appendix A, page 111).

Ethical clearance and consent were obtained from the Western Cape Department of Education to conduct the research in the selected schools (See Appendix B, page 113). Permission to conduct the research was sought from the principals of the schools and teachers. The nature of the research was explained to participants. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions before they agreed to participate in the study. Participants were informed that they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality was ensured by not using the names of the participants or of the schools. Code names were used to ensure the anonymity of all participants in the study, and their right to privacy. The two schools were referred to as School A and School B and the participants were referred to as Teacher (1–8).

The study aimed to explore how teachers taught reading in Grade 4 English Home Language, therefore the main participants in this study were the teachers. The study explored the extent of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. The research questions and theoretical framework (PCK) emphasize the teachers' knowledge, instructional strategies, and classroom practices, rather than learners' perspectives or academic performance. Therefore, learners were not the primary unit of analysis. The primary data collection tools included interviews with teachers and classroom observations. This design fits a case study approach focused on teaching practices, and does not require direct learner participation to answer the research questions.

Including children as direct participants raises additional ethical challenges such as requiring parental/guardian consent. Including learners in the study would have required more stringent ethical clearance, including measures to protect minor participants and would involve safeguards around data privacy, power dynamics, and potential emotional impact.

Given the limited scope and timeframe of a master's-level study, obtaining all the necessary permissions and meeting these ethical obligations might was not considered feasible or necessary for this research focus.

3.8 Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology. This study was underpinned within the interpretive paradigm and applied a qualitative approach, as is applicable for case studies, since the experiences of the participants were considered. The site selection and the sampled population were explained and it was clarified why these were used for the study. Three methods were used to collect data: (i) document analysis; (ii) interviews with Grade 4 English Home Language teachers; and (iii) lesson observations of these teachers. The data were analysed by means of thematic analysis, as explained in section 3.4. The process was outlined to ensure trustworthiness of the data collected. Furthermore, the strict ethical requirements were explained, as required by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Chapter Four will include the data presentation, a thematic analysis will be applied to the data in Chapter Five. The findings from each dataset will be tabulated. The tables will include the various codes, categories found from this data, and the themes that were developed from the data.

CHAPTER FOUR:

PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected with the aim of investigating how Grade 4 English Home Language teachers teach reading. This study used three datasets to collect information on how teachers in Grade 4 English Home Language teach reading, which was discussed in Chapter Three. The first dataset in this study was a document collection of the guidelines on how to teach reading, as outlined in three documents available to teachers. These documents were: the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), Adjusted Teaching Plans (ATPs) and the Western Cape Reading Strategies and Norms 2020–2025 document. The second dataset was the semi-structured interviews conducted with the eight participants. Last, the third dataset utilised in this study was lesson observations to observe and document how teachers taught reading in the classroom.

The raw data collected from policy documents (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement and the Annual Teaching Plan) for document analysis, lesson observations and individual interviews are presented in this chapter. The raw data were studied in preparation for the data analysis section in Chapter Five.

The data were collected to answer the research questions. The main research question for this study was:

How is reading currently taught in Grade 4 English Home Language?

The sub-questions considered were:

- What guidelines for teaching reading are recommended by the Department of Basic Education for Grade 4 English Home Language?

- What are the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language?

- How do teachers assist struggling readers?

4.2 Datasets

Document analysis (dataset 1) was applied to examine the guidance given by policymakers in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement document, particularly on how to teach reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. The second policy document that was analysed was the Adjusted Teaching Plan, which was created during COVID-19, In order to alleviate the

impact of COVID-19 on learning and teaching, the Department of Basic Education adopted a multi-year curriculum recovery approach (DBE, 2023). Last, the researcher analysed the Western Cape Education Department's Reading Strategy 2020–2025 programme, which aimed to improve reading within schools in the Western Cape.

Lesson observations (dataset 2) were conducted to observe how teachers taught reading and the various techniques and strategies they used to assist students in comprehending the texts they have read. By observing eight teachers (one lesson per teacher) to observe each teachers' pedagogies when teaching reading, the researcher witnessed how teachers used specific reading strategies and techniques to teach reading.

Semi-structured individual interviews (dataset 3) were utilised to comprehend the participants' perspectives on their role as Grade 4 English Home Language teachers, their teaching methods, and what reading techniques or strategies they taught learners when reading.

4.2.1 Dataset 1: Document analysis

The Department of Basic Education defines the CAPS document as follows: "A National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement is a single, comprehensive, and concise policy document, which has replaced the Subject and Learning Area Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines for all the subjects listed in the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12" (DBE, 2021). The CAPS document offers basic guidelines on what to teach in a subject.

4.2.1.1 CAPS document

The extract in Table 4.1 presents the guidelines offered in the CAPS document regarding what to teach in reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. Furthermore, it explains how many hours should be spent on reading, how many days and the genres that teachers need to read with learners.

The CAPS document states: "The reading process consists of pre-reading, reading and post-reading stages". Table 4.1 shows an extract from the CAPS document (DBE, 2011b) offering guidance to teachers on how to teach reading. Reading is divided into three phases, with each phase including a different strategies that can be used during that particular phase.

Table 4.1: Reading Process extracted from the Grade 4 English Home Language CAPS document (DBE, 2011b:10)

Pre-reading:
Activating prior knowledge
Looking at the source, author, and publication date
Reading the first and last paragraphs of a section
Making predictions
Reading:
Pause occasionally to check your comprehension and to let the ideas sink in.
Compare the content to your predictions.
Use the context to work to work out the meaning of unknown words as much as is possible; where this is not possible, use a dictionary.
Visualise what you are reading.
Keep going even if you don't understand a part here and there.
Reread a section if you do not understand at all. Read confusing sections aloud, at a slower pace, or both.
Ask someone to help you understand a difficult section.
Add reading marks and annotate key points.
Reflect on what you read.
Post reading:
If you will need to recall specific information, make a graphic organiser or outline of key ideas and a few supporting details.
Draw conclusions.
Write a summary to help you clarify and recall main ideas.
Think about and write new questions you have on the topic.

Ask yourself if you accomplished your purpose?
Understanding – confirm your understanding of the text.
Evaluate – bias, accuracy, quality of the text.
Extend your thinking – use ideas you saw in text.

4.2.1.2 ATP (Annual Teaching Plans: English Home Language: Grade 4)

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) created the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) document which offers guidance for teachers in teaching the necessary content and skills. The document was created to address the disruptions that COVID-19 had on the education system. It was designed to accommodate the negative impact of COVID-19 and deviated from the original curriculum (DBE, 2020)**.** The ATP outlines a weekly schedule for teaching each academic term, defining the fundamental skills and knowledge that must be taught.

The section depicted in Table 4.2 is a description of the Annual Teaching Plan for Grade 4 English Home Language. An extract is shown offering guidelines to teachers.

Table 4.2: Adjusted Teaching Plan for Grade 4 English Home Language (DBE, 2021**)**

2023/24 ANNUAL TEACHING PLANS: ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE: GRADE 4

	TERM 3			
WEEK	LISTENING AND SPEAKING	READING AND VIEWING	WRITING AND PRESENTING	LANGUAGE STRUCTURES AND CONVENTIONS
7-8	Listens to a poem/s and completes a listening comprehension activity **Introductory activities** • Discusses what the poem is about • Relates to own experience • Identifies rhyme and rhythm • Identifies words which begin with the same sound • Expresses feelings stimulated by the poem • Performs poem/ selected stanzas **Learners are to:** • Practise various listening and speaking activities • Relate poem to own experience • Identify rhythm and rhyme in the poem • Express feelings stimulated by the poem • Identify words which begin with the same sound • Practise using words that imitate their sounds, e.g., bees buzz, glass tinkles, etc. (onomatopoeia) • Perform a poem/ selected stanzas **NOTE** **Ongoing Assessment for Learning**	Reads a poem/s and completes a reading comprehension **Introductory activities** • Pre-reading: Predicts from title and pictures • Use reading strategies, e.g., prediction • Looks at pictures carefully • Uses contextual clues **Learners are to:** • Identify rhythm and rhyme • Break up words into syllables • Express feelings stimulated by the poem read **Reading methodologies** Read aloud (*Drop all and read*)/ group-guided/ shared/ paired/ independent reading of the novelette **Reading for enjoyment** • Poetry/ novelette to be read daily for a minimum of 30 minutes • Reflects on texts read independently • Relates to own context	Write sentences that rhyme **Introductory activities** • Identifies and demonstrates how words rhyme by manipulating, adding, deleting or substituting sounds in words • Uses descriptive language to explain or to ask questions • Recognises letters and letter-sound matches **Learners are to:** • Write pairs of sentences of the same length that rhyme • Use appropriate rhythm and rhyme • Use knowledge of syllables to develop the rhythm and rhyme **Personal dictionary** • Record words and their meanings in a personal dictionary • Use drawings or sentences using the words or explanations to show the meaning, etc. • Place new vocabulary on a word wall	**Word level work:** Conjunctions **Sentence level work** Statements, simple sentences **Word meaning** Personification, alliteration, similes, metaphors, rhythm and rhyme **Spelling and punctuation** Dictionary use, abbreviations: acronyms, truncation, initialisation
9-10	Listens to an advertisement read aloud or from radio or TV **Introductory activities** • Makes predictions • Interprets and discusses message, including the values in the text • Discusses the structure, language use, purpose and audience of the text	Reads an advertisement and completes a reading comprehension **Introductory activities** • Interprets and discusses the message, including the values in the text • Discusses the structure, purpose and audience of the text **Learners are to:**	Writes an advertisement **Introductory activities** • Interprets and discusses the message, including the values in the text • Discusses the structure, purpose and audience of the text **Learners are to:** • Use content appropriate for purpose and audience	**Word level work** Collective nouns, reflexive pronouns, stems, conjunctions **Sentence level work** Subject-verb agreement, adjectives, adverbs, verbs, similes, metaphors, idioms **Spelling and punctuation**

4.2.1.3 WCED Reading Strategy 2020–2025 – Reading Norms Intermediate Phase

The Western Cape Education Department established the Reading Strategy 2020–2025 to address the literacy crisis. The extracts in Table 4.3 are an example from the WCED Reading strategy 2020–2025 Reading Norms for Intermediate Phase. Table 4.3 extracts outline what skills to be learnt for reading and viewing, the content to be taught and the strategies and skills teachers should use in their teaching methods.

Table 4.3: Reading Norms for Intermediate Phase (WCED, 2021)

READING STRATEGY FOR GRADES 4 - 6		
SKILLS	**CONTENT**	**STRATEGIES AND SUB-SKILLS**
READING & VIEWING	Prescribed literature genre • Folklore • Short story • Drama • Poetry Reading and Viewing strategies • Summary • Visual literacy: advertising (poster, pamphlet), cartoon, comic strip, diagram/graph/table/ charts • Critical language awareness (being aware of the denotation and connotation of words and that it carries hidden meanings and messages, e.g. stereotypes, the speaker's prejudices and intentions) • Comprehension • Prepared and unprepared reading aloud	Reading/viewing strategies: Use pre-reading, reading and post reading strategies: • To understand the text • For close and critical reading of the text (reading comprehension) • To demonstrate independent reading (reading widely for pleasure, information and learning) Introduce learners to: • Text features – titles, illustrations, graphs, charts, diagrams, headings, subheadings, numbering, captions, headlines, format, e.g. newspaper columns, etc. • Text structures – lists, sequential order, description, procedures, main point and supporting points, narrative sequence. • Parts of a book – title page, table of contents, chapters, glossary, etc. • Reading and Viewing strategies -- Skimming for main ideas -- Scanning for supporting details -- Inferring meaning of unfamiliar words and images by using word attack skills and contextual clues -- Rereading -- Making notes (main and supporting ideas) -- Summarise main and supporting ideas in point form/paragraph as per required length -- Clarifying -- Making inferences -- Explaining writer's point of view -- Drawing conclusions/own opinion • Visual literacy (range of graphic and visual

	• Read given text to parent / guardian / adult / senior learner (to be signed)
	• Retell what has been read
	
	Reading corner and library
	• Read books from the classroom reading corner and library
	  o Independent, paired, and group reading
	
	Participate in community reading activities
	• Volunteer to read
		o Independent, paired, and group reading
		• Teach reading strategies
		  o Skimming, scanning, predicting, inferring, visualizing, deducing, questioning, making notes, summarizing
		• Develop homework reading diary
		• Monitor and check homework reading diary
		• Manage classroom reading corner and administer library – issuing reading books to learners
			• Reading diary log register
			• Literature genres (Folktales, Short stories, Novel, Drama, Poetry)
			• Information texts
			• Multimedia texts
			• Electronic texts
			• Print media
			• Visual texts
			• Texts used across the curriculum
				HL	150 - 200 words	200 – 250 words	250 – 300 words

			FAL	100 – 150 words	150 – 200 words	200 - 250 words
			NUMBER OF PAGES TO READ PER DAY			
			5-6 pages per day		6 – 8 pages per day	8 – 10 pages per day

The extracts in Table 4.3 explain what reading genres are to be read, the strategies to use when teaching, the necessary resources and how many hours to spend on reading in Grade 4–6.

4.2.2 Dataset 2: Classroom observations

For this study, the researcher observed one lesson per teacher of eight Grade 4 English Home Language teachers, from School A and School B, to determine how teachers currently teach reading. An observation schedule (See Appendix C) was used to direct the researcher to observe and identify actions relevant to the aim of the study. The observation tool looked at how the lesson was introduced; what resources and materials were used for the lesson; what teaching methodologies were used by the teacher; how the teacher assessed learners' reading; learners' engagement in the lesson; whether the teacher applied the guidelines as prescribed in the CAPS document for teaching reading and finally, how the teacher concluded the lesson. These actions were recorded as field notes.

4.2.2.1 Teacher observation 1

The researcher entered the class and first observed whether the teacher had any reading resources in her classroom. The teacher did not have any reading books in her class besides the prescribed reading book for Grade 4 English Home Language which was the Platinum English Home Language textbook. Thereafter, the researcher looked for any technology such as a projector or a computer and found that the teacher did not possess these resources in her classroom. The researcher also looked at how many learners there were in the class and found that there were 34–35 learners in a class. Then the researcher checked whether the learners had a copy of the reading material and found that each learner had a book. The researcher studied how the teacher introduced the lesson and observed the pedagogies the teacher utilised during the reading lesson. The teacher introduced the lesson by displaying words to the learners on flashcards on the board and the learners had to read the words aloud. Thereafter, the teacher asked learners to form sentences with the words on the flashcards and then proceeded to give the definitions of the words. The teacher related some of the words to current affairs that learners were aware of. The teacher also had the learners look up new word definitions in the dictionary. The teacher explained that all the words on the flashcards were words learners would find in the story they were about to read. The teacher and learners were reading a text out of an English Home Language reading book for Grade 4. The learners started to read the story aloud together. The teacher asked specific learners to read from the text while the rest followed. Thereafter, the teacher asked the learners to predict what would happen in the rest of the story by looking at the first paragraph of the story. The teacher reverted to the new word and placed the word in the context of the story to derive meaning. In between reading, the teacher explained the text and discussed events in the text with the

learners. The teacher asked learners questions about the text and a few learners answered the questions. The teacher summarised what had happened in the story and the learners answered more questions about the story on their own in their books.

4.2.2.2 Teacher observation 2

Since Teacher 2 came from the same school as Teacher 1, which was School B, the researcher noticed that the teacher also did not have a computer or projector. There were no reading books in the teacher's class owing to a lack of storage space. The teacher first read aloud a comprehension text that was extracted from a Grade 4 English Home Language term test which students had completed during the June exam period, while the learners followed along with her. The teacher paused to ask learners whether they knew anything about the topic and explained what the topic was about to the learners. Three learners answered that it was about a cheetah. Afterwards, the teacher asked about the characters and their relationships and what the characters did. The teacher continued to read the same text with emotion and varied her tone of voice, stopping in between the reading to explain the feelings of the character. Midway, the teacher asked learners to describe the character. Thereafter, the teacher identified a new word, 'twig', asked the learners to pronounce it and then showed the learners a picture of the new word. Thereafter, the teacher selected a few learners to read aloud as a group while the rest followed. Each group started reading a new paragraph. However, learners in the first row were not reading together and one learner read at her own speed. The teacher explained new words to the learners. The teacher asked the learners what other words they did not understand and explained the meaning of these. The teacher asked questions verbally about the story and multiple hands were raised to answer. The teacher summarised the story. Last, the learners completed questions about the story in the class. The teacher ended the lesson by marking the answers from the comprehension with the learners. The questions were based on the text the class had read, which included what the story was about, who the characters were, and what happened between the characters. Learners gave the answers to the questions aloud and they could personally ask the teacher for assistance when they were unsure of their answers.

4.2.2.3 Teacher observation 3

The teacher instructed the learners to write a heading in their books. The teacher asked the learners what the title of the story was, which was 'Finches'. The teacher asked the learners what a finch was and proceeded to Google it on her computer and showed the learners a picture of a finch from her projector. The teacher proceeded to read the story and stopped midway to ask learners a question related to the story. Thereafter, the class read the story aloud together. The teacher proceeded to ask who did not understand the story and attempted to explain to the learners what the story was about. The learners read the story aloud together

for the second time. After reading, the teacher and the learners answered questions based on the text, as part of the comprehension activity by writing out the answers in their books. The teacher also tried to show learners how to answer the questions in their own words and not to copy directly from the text.

4.2.2.4 Teacher observation 4

The teacher who was observed had reading materials in her classroom such as novels for learners to read at their leisure. The teacher also had a projector and a computer. The lesson started with the teacher asking learners what the title of the story was. The teacher made flashcards of new words and handed them to learners. Thereafter, the learners had to take out seven different pencil colours and write the numbers 1 to 7 in different colours in their books. The teacher did not explain what the purpose of the different colours represented. Thereafter, the teacher mentioned skimming and asked the learners what skimming entailed. Students had to identify specific words in the text and number the paragraphs. The teacher had learners look for specific words in the text and to circle them. The teacher showed learners a video of the subject in the story, a finch which is a type of bird, for background information. The teacher reinforced what the subject was in the video by describing the subject's features such as how it looked. The teacher continued by showing a second video of cows on a farm to reinforce the learners' comprehension of the story. The teacher read the story while learners listened. They did not follow the story from the page it was on, so that they could get an idea of what the text was about. The teacher read and explained in between and asked questions. Once the teacher had read the story aloud and the learners had listened, the teacher gave each learner the page with the story on it and gave the learners five minutes to read on their own and to underline words they did not understand. Then the learners had to take a ruler/ their finger and to read with the teacher. Thereafter, the teacher explained the difficult words and included synonyms of those words. The teacher used real-life scenarios as examples to explain the meaning of the new, difficult words. The class read aloud together. Thereafter, the teacher divided the learners into groups and each group had certain lines to read from the story; then the learners read to each other together in groups. The teacher facilitated this by listening to each group. The lesson concluded without any classwork or homework.

4.2.2.5 Teacher observation 5

The teacher had learners take out the reading material which they were going to read. The teacher started by mentioning the "five- finger strategy" and asked the learners to recite what it is (when, where, what, who and why). The teacher started by reading aloud, while learners followed in their reader. The teacher had specific learners stand and read aloud. The learners then had to write a summary of the story by applying the five-finger strategy to the text which

they had read. The researcher observed that the teacher did not apply any other reading strategies in her lesson. The teacher had resources

4.2.2.6 Teacher observation 6

The teacher read a story to the learners about a boy with autism. A hug machine was then invented as a therapeutic device to calm hypersensitive individuals like someone with autism. The teacher asked learners whether they knew what the topic was about, which was "autism" and explained in simple terms to the learners what it was. The teacher changed the tempo/tone of her voice to fit the story. The teacher stopped in between reading to explain the feelings of the character and to ask the learners what the characters liked to do. Thereafter, the teacher asked learners whether they could pronounce a new word in the text, 'trough' and then showed them a picture of a trough. Then the teacher had the learners read aloud row-by-row. The teacher studied the structure of the story by asking the learners what the numbers were along the sides of the paragraphs. Then the teacher asked who in the class did not understand the difference between a paragraph and a sentence and demonstrated on the board what the difference was between a sentence and a paragraph. Thereafter, the teacher read again while learners listened and followed. Then the teacher and the class read aloud together. Afterwards the learners read per row, with each row having a paragraph to read aloud. The teacher identified a new word in the story and explained the meaning. After asking the learners questions, the teacher summarised the story. Since the story was about a hugging machine, the teacher showed the learners a YouTube video of this particular machine. Last, the learners had to answer questions based on the story by themselves and then the teacher marked the answers with the learners.

4.2.2.7 Teacher observation 7

The teacher read a comprehension story from a Grade 4 English Home Language test. The teacher started by explaining the theme of the story which was centred on teamwork. The teacher divided the class into groups as the theme was about working together as a team. Each group had an opportunity to read the story aloud together. Thereafter, the teacher read aloud together with the whole class. The teacher reinforced the theme of the story by making real-life examples of teamwork such as reminding learners of sports teams where teamwork occurs. The teacher went through the comprehension questions with the class and explained specific words to the learners. There were about 10 questions, which were from the Grade 4 English Home Language test. The learners answered the questions in their classwork books during class time.

4.2.2.8 Teacher observation 8

The teacher read a story from the Back on Track programme booklet designed for Grade 4. The lesson started with the learners spelling out difficult words from a list that was in the text. Thereafter, the teacher identified the title of the story and asked learners to assume what the story was about by studying the title. Then the learners had to identify pictures in the story provided in the text. By looking at the title and the pictures in text, learners had to guess what the story is about. The teacher then asked students what kind of story it was and how they could identify this type of story. Then the teacher explained how they could identify this type of story (folktale). The teacher mentioned skimming and started identifying key words. She looked at the first sentence of every paragraph. Thereafter, the whole class read aloud the first line of each paragraph, to gain an idea of what the story was about. The teacher proceeded to ask the class what they had learnt about the story from reading the first sentence of each paragraph. After skimming, they had to identify unfamiliar words while reading the text. Thereafter, each row read a paragraph aloud. After reading, the teacher asked all the learners what the story was about and some learners put up their hands to answer. Then the teacher instructed the students to identify five unfamiliar words from the text and to highlight these words. A few learners went to write their words on the board. The teacher then broke up the difficult words into syllables and told the learners to reread the sentence in which the difficult word was found and to find the meaning of the word by doing this. The teacher then offered synonyms of these difficult words and the learners wrote them in their books. Thereafter, the teacher played a video of the main character in the story, a cheetah, which gave the learners an idea of what the story was about. The teacher added more difficult words and broke the words up into syllables.

Summary of data set 2

The section above described the lesson observations that the researcher conducted with the eight participants. The researcher conducted the lesson observations to determine how teachers taught reading. The researcher used an observation schedule which looked at how the teacher introduced the lesson; what technology was used; reading material; the different strategies used; how reading is assessed; how struggling readers are assisted; how learners are involved in the lesson; the application of the guidelines as prescribed in the CAPS document; and how the teacher concluded the lesson. First, the researcher observed that most teachers used guidelines from the CAPS documents such as identifying new words, prediction and using visual cues. Second, the researcher found that the lessons were mostly teacher centred and only a few learners participated in answering questions orally about the reading texts; generally the strongest learners answered the questions.

4.2.3 Dataset 3: Semi-structured interview questions and answers

The interview consisted of 14 questions, which included both open- and closed-ended questions. The researcher interviewed eight Grade 4 English Home Language teachers. There were five teachers from School A and three from School B. These teachers were interviewed individually face-to-face when they had a free period during school hours.

Question 1

With the first question, the researcher asked participants for how long they had been teaching English. This question was raised to determine teachers' experience in the subject.

Table 4.4: Years of experience teaching English Home Language

	Participant	Number of years
Question 1 How many years have you been teaching English Home Language?	**Teacher 1**	18
	Teacher 2	3
	Teacher 3	3
	Teacher 4	15
	Teacher 5	1
	Teacher 6	5
	Teacher 7	6
	Teacher 8	17

The teachers' experience in teaching English Home Language ranges from one year up to 18 years. There were five teachers with less than 10 years' experience compared to three teachers with more than 15 years' experience.

Question 2

In the second question, the researcher asked the participants how many years they had been teaching Grade 4 specifically.

Table 4.5: Teacher's experience teaching Grade 4

	Participant	Number of years
Question 2 How many years have you been teaching Grade 4?	**Teacher 1**	18
	Teacher 2	3
	Teacher 3	3

	Participant	Number of years
	Teacher 4	15
	Teacher 5	1
	Teacher 6	5
	Teacher 7	6
	Teacher 8	17

Question 3

For the third question, the researcher asked the participants whether they had received any training on how to teach reading to determine whether they had a broad knowledge of how to teach reading.

Table 4.6: Teachers' experience teaching Grade 4

Question 3 Have you received any training on how to teach reading?	**Teacher 1:** When I completed my honours degree, I had a module about how to teach Grade 4 learners how to read with comprehension.
	Teacher 2: In my first year of my undergraduate studies.
	Teacher 3: Yes, during my first year at university.
	Teacher 4: No, but I'm watching a lot of TikTok videos and I'm watching a lot of videos on YouTube all the time. I'm watching things so that I can just keep up with the modern ways of teaching yes.
	Teacher 5: Never.
	Teacher 6: Yes, I attended training in my first year of teaching which was offered by the school.
	Teacher 7: Yes, I had a short component of teaching reading in my undergraduate studies.
	Teacher 8: Yes, we did a brief section on how to teach reading in my undergraduate studies.

Question 4

For Question 4, the researcher asked participants whether their training on how to teach reading was part of their undergraduate studies in order to determine whether undergraduate programmes focus on this in depth.

Table 4.7: Training on how to teach reading in undergraduate studies

Question 4 Was the training on how to teach reading part of your undergraduate studies?	**Teacher 1:** No, my postgraduate studies.
	Teacher 2: Yes.
	Teacher 3: No.
	Teacher 4: In my first year of university, the English module included teaching reading.
	Teacher 5: A little bit of it, but I did a PGCE. It didn't really go into specifically what it is.
	Teacher 6: No.
	Teacher 7: No.
	Teacher 8: No.

Question 5

The fifth question asked participants to describe how they teach reading to learners. This question was posed to see whether the teacher's description of how they teach reading corresponded with what the researcher observed in the lesson observation in order to identify any discrepancies.

Table 4.8: Teachers described how they teach reading

Question 5 Please describe how you teach reading.	**Teacher 1:** First, we identify difficult words in the text. Then I give the meaning of the words; thereafter, the learners make sentences with the words. Sometimes I translate the words into Afrikaans. Thereafter, we start reading, first as a group and individually thereafter.
	Teacher 2: During the pre-reading, learners must look at pictures and the title and decide what they think about it. Thereafter, I read the text to them twice while they listen and follow and during the second reading I explain the story in context and the meaning of difficult words. Thereafter, learners take turns to read in pairs.
	Teacher 3: I read the text myself first to gain understanding of what the message is in the story as every story has a moral lesson and then I focus on that and use it as a basis to understand the text. My resources and props will include those things and I try to make what they have read a reality.

	Teacher 4: We identify the difficult words first; thereafter, I explain the words to them, make sentences with the words and discuss the meaning and translate the words to Afrikaans too. Then I place the learners in groups and put one strong learner in each group. Then I read the passage to them without them following the passage but they listen, so that they can get an idea of the content of the passage and what it is about. Thereafter, I hand out the text to them and then each one reads the passage and underlines the words they struggle to read or don't know the meaning of. Thereafter I explain the difficult words, how to pronounce the words too.
	Teacher 5: I would read the text first; thereafter I have the learners read the text aloud.
	Teacher 6: Firstly, I allow the learners the opportunity to read the text by themselves. Thereafter, they underline words they don't know or cannot understand; thereafter, they have the opportunity to tell me or show me the words that they do not understand or do not know. Then I will either explain the words to them or we will use a dictionary to look up the words' meaning. Usually it is easier for me to put up the projector and Google translate the words and discuss it. Thereafter, I read once or twice to them and then I give them an opportunity to either read the entire text row-by-row. This is how I can see who can and cannot read. I pair stronger readers with weak readers.
	Teacher 7: Usually, I read the text aloud to them first while they read and follow; thereafter, we study the difficult words that they do not understand. Thereafter, I select learners to read for the class or have the class read together. We read the same text three or four times until everyone has had an opportunity to read.
	Teacher 8: First, I start by identifying the title of the story; thereafter, I have learners assume or guess what the story is about just by reading the title. Then we look at any pictures provided to gain a better idea of the text. Thereafter, the whole class reads aloud simultaneously by reading the first paragraph only. Then I stop and ask the learners what the first paragraph tells us about the text. After reading the entire text, we identify at least five unfamiliar words from the text and highlight it and some learners write their new unfamiliar words on the board. Then I break up the difficult words and tell learners to reread the word in the sentence and find meaning of the word. Then I show a PowerPoint with pictures or a video of the subject in the text.

Question 6

In Question 6, the researcher asked the participants how they assess learners' reading ability before starting to teach them how to read in order to determine whether the teachers meet the learners where they are at with their reading ability. This was done in the form of a baseline assessment. However, it is not mandated to be conducted by the WCED. Information about baseline assessments were not found in the CAPS document or in the WCED Reading Strategies and Norms 2020–2025 document.

Table 4.9: Assessment of learners' reading ability

Question 6	**Teacher 1:** They have Grade 4 reading books. We started reading the book at the beginning of the year and then I could identify who can read or who struggles to read.

How do you assess the learners' reading before you start teaching them how to read?	**Teacher 2:** At the beginning of the year learners do a baseline assessment in which they come read aloud for me and then I assess their reading ability based on a rubric criteria.
	Teacher 3: They complete a baseline assessment at the beginning of the year, in the first three days of school.
	Teacher 4: I have learners read aloud to me and based on how they read, I can determine their level of reading.
	Teacher 5: We do a baseline assessment at the beginning of the year, which includes prepared and unprepared reading. They read aloud to me individually; this is how I identify their reading ability.
	Teacher 6: We have a baseline assessment which includes an unprepared read aloud.
	Teacher 7: We do a baselines assessment; there is a read-aloud in the baseline assessment.
	Teacher 8: Learners do a baseline assessment in the beginning of first term.

Question 7

For Question 7, the researcher asked participants how they assessed reading after having taught learners how to read a text. This question was posed to see how teachers test learners' comprehension of a text.

Table 4.10: How reading is assessed after teaching learners how to read

Question 7 How do you assess reading after you have taught learners how to read a text?	**Teacher 1:** I ask them questions to see if they understood what we have read together.
	Teacher 2: They complete reading comprehension questions in their books and we mark the answers together.
	Teacher 3: We do an informal assessment in which I ask questions based on the reading text.
	Teacher 4: By doing comprehension questions.
	Teacher 5: By asking them questions after reading the text.
	Teacher 6: I assess how they answered the reading comprehension questions and I call back the weaker learners and have them reread and see if they were able to understand the text.
	Teacher 7: By asking oral-based questions or written questions.
	Teacher 8: Learners have to complete questions based on the text in their workbooks.

Question 8

The researcher asked participants whether there were any specific strategies or techniques they taught the learners to use to assist them with understanding what they have read. With this question the researcher wanted to determine which strategies and techniques teachers use when teaching readying, and how they use them.

Table 4.11: Strategies and techniques taught to help learners comprehend the text being read

Question 8 What specific strategies or techniques do you teach the learners to use to help them comprehend what they have read?	**Teacher 1:** Asking questions through the words they have identified. It can tell them what the text is about.
	Teacher 2: Linking the title of a text to a picture.
	Teacher 3: We read the text and they underline the difficult words that they do not know; thereafter, we look for synonyms of those words or use the dictionary to get the meaning of the words.
	Teacher 4: I ask them the four 'w' questions, which are what-when-where-who, to see if they understand.
	Teacher 5: Having a dictionary, I help them break up the words, read the word and do prefixes and suffixes and we look at the root word and identify the part of the word which they understand.
	Teacher 6: We underline what we think is important; when we read a text we always start with word recognition, thereafter we answer the four 'w's which is what-when-where-who. Thereafter, we discuss the characters, then the setting, the plot and the lesson until they are able to use that to summarise or retell the story.
	Teacher 7: I use the words 'what-where-when-who' to answer questions about a text. This is my framework which I used to understand the content. I also play the class videos that relate to the content in the text. I also use skimming to identify sounds by circling words with the same letter sound.
	Teacher 8: I teach learners to identify new words that are unfamiliar to them and have them highlight those words and have them look for the meaning of the words in the dictionary and read it in the context of the text they have read.

Question 9

For Question 9, the researcher asked participants what aspects in teaching reading in English Home Language they found challenging. The question aimed to gain information about the potential obstacles that teachers dealt while teaching reading.

Table 4.12: Challenges in teaching reading in English Home Language

Question 9	**Teacher 1:** Learners whose home language is English can answer the questions, but learners who speak Afrikaans at home will struggle.

Which aspects in teaching reading in English Home Language do you find challenging?	**Teacher 2:** When the learners' mother tongue language is not English Home Language. Learners speak Afrikaans at home and the school's English Home Language curriculum's vocabulary is high at school and learners are not exposed to English at home.
	Teacher 3: The fact that they do not know how to read. They do not know the basics of how to pronounce words or spell words. They did not fully learn how to read in the Foundation Phase.
	Teacher 4: I find it challenging when English is not the learner's first language at home.
	Teacher 5: The fact that English is a learner's second or third language and they will read fluently but not understand what they are reading. Secondly, learners cannot relate to the reading texts and find it boring.
	Teacher 6: Word recognition. Especially after COVID-19, I am not trained to teach them how to read. When they reach Grade 4, it is expected that they should know how to read already; however, this is no longer the case, because after COVID, learners struggle to read. Now I need to go to colleagues in the Foundation Phase to seek advice. It takes a lot of time to teach them how to read and how to answer questions.
	Teacher 7: Identifying words and all the phonic sounds. Parents not involvemed in helping learners learn how to read.
	Teacher 8: Most learners can read efficiently but there are learners who cannot decode two-letter words which is a challenge. Some learners have been struggling to read for the past three years and in Grade 4 they still struggle, so it is expected of me to bring that child to the reading level of the rest.

Question 10

In the tenth question the participants were asked if they found the CAPS document helpful in terms of teaching reading. This question was aimed at determining how much assistance and guidelines were offered to teachers from the CAPS document as it acts as a guideline for teachers. Check spacing requirements refer to all tables in text

Table 4.13: Helpfulness of CAPS document with regard to teaching reading

Question 10 Do you find the CAPS document helpful with regard to teaching reading?	**Teacher 1:** Yes, you must follow the pace of the learners. If the learner is not ready to go to the next level, then you must pay more attention to them although it says you must finish. I experienced that if you see a child is not ready to go to the next level then you must sit with them.
	Teacher 2: I go according to CAPS but can't continue a topic if a learner doesn't understand. I must continue revision and intervention if they struggle to finish in time. The CAPS document must have less content; it requires a lot from teachers.
	Teacher 3: Not with anything regarding reading. It will tell you to teach Reading and Viewing in 3–4 days and teach 2–3 hours. I tend to find we don't do what the CAPS document says.
	Teacher 4: Not necessarily, it basically just tells us what to do per week per term. CAPS is just a guideline and does not go in depth into teaching reading.

	Teacher 5: It gives guidelines, but we do not really have time to sit and do proper reading with learners or to implement their strategies in class time.
	Teacher 6: There are helpful tips and recommendations.
	Teacher 7: It lacks; I would like more assistance.
	Teacher 8: Not necessarily.

Question 11

In this question the researcher asked participants whether they adhered strictly to the CAPS guidelines. This question aimed to determine whether the teachers adapted the curriculum to their needs.

Table 4.14: Adherence to following the CAPS guidelines

Question 11 Do you adhere strictly to the CAPS guidelines?	**Teacher 1:** Yes, I adapt it to what is best for the learners.
	Teacher 2: Honestly, I do not follow CAPS regarding reading.
	Teacher 3: I have an extra text that I give to learners on a Friday and we have intervention classes wherein they get a certain amount of books to read within two weeks.
	Teacher 4: Not necessarily; it depends on the pace at which the learners grasp or comprehend the topic, if they do not fully understand then I need to revisit a topic. There are some topics they grasp faster than others and have to spend more time on.
	Teacher 5: Yes, because we have to do the same thing as Grade 4 teachers.
	Teacher 6: I do not use the CAPS document, since I have been using the ATPs.
	Teacher 7: Yes, but everything is not set in stone. First, I identify my learners' needs.
	Teacher 8: No. We are following the ATPs from 2020.

Question 12

For the twelfth question, the participants were asked whether they were aware of any interventions that WCED and DBE had to address and assist teachers in how to teach reading. The purpose of this question was to determine whether WCED and DBE does, in fact, offer interventions and how they proceed with making teachers aware of these programmes.

Table 4.15: Awareness of interventions by WCED and DBE to address how to teach reading

Question 12 Are you aware of any interventions that WCED and DBE have to address how to teach reading?	**Teacher 1:** Yes, in the past, but now it is online.
	Teacher 2: No.
	Teacher 3: Yes, they had a workshop last year and at the beginning of each year they have workshops for new teachers.
	Teacher 4: No.
	Teacher 5: No.
	Teacher 6: I feel like instead of the Back on Track programme which focused on English and Afrikaans, there should have had a reading component. Because that's what they struggle with most: if you can't read then you can't answer questions. I record all our summaries before the exam and send it to them digitally, especially to those who can't read. They are able to listen to the work instead of having to read it.
	Teacher 7: No.
	Teacher 8: No.

Question 13

The thirteenth question asked participants whether they had been trained in any of the programmes introduced by WCED and DBE on how to teach reading.

Table 4.16: Training in any of these intervention programmes introduced by WCED and DBE

Question 13 Have you been trained in any of these intervention programmes introduced by WCED and DBE?

None of the participants had been trained in programmes introduced by WCED on how to teach reading.

Question 14

The final question asked teachers what their opinion was on what the most effective way to teach reading skills to English Home Language learners. This question aimed to gauge teachers' opinions on the matter and allowed them to expand their views on teaching reading.

Table 4.17: Teachers' opinions on the most effective way to teach reading in English Home Language

	Teacher 1: To build on what the learners already know.
	Teacher 2: Explaining vocabulary after reading a text as learners lose focus if they do not know a word.

Question 14 In your opinion, what is the most effective way of teaching reading to English Home Language learners?	**Teacher 3:** You need to make the reading text into a reality for learners, for example, play a song for learners relating to the topic of the story or showing them a picture of the title of the story.
	Teacher 4: First plant the seed for them to love reading. Use technology like YouTube videos with subtitles for students to read from. Put them into the routine of reading.
	Teacher 5: I will put on a movie with the subtitles for the class; then they hear and see the words and they see a picture too. Music is a second resource as I find that it is the easiest way and it makes reading fun.
	Teacher 6: Repetition, not the same story but a story that includes the same words that they can recognise in the next story. Reading with comprehension is very important.
	Teacher 7: To model the reading, focus on phonics and having a phonics list should be implemented in each grade. These words should include words learners struggle with.
	Teacher 8: Comprehensive reading. They need to understand a text from a textbook in all their subjects. You need to work on teaching them how to decode and understand the text first.

4.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter the researcher presented the data. The raw data that were collected gave the researcher an overview of the data and permitted the researcher to organise the data and to make conclusions. First, section 4.2.1 analysed dataset one, offering insight into what guidelines are available to teachers and what strategies are recommended to them. In section 4.2.2, the classroom observations, dataset two illustrated how the participants applied the curriculum in their lessons. Lastly, the interviews, dataset three, presented the participants with the opportunity to explain the methods they use to teach reading. The data was divided into categories themes were identified.

These datasets are combined in Chapter Five, and were then used to answer the research questions. Lesson observations as well as interviews were interpreted by using the theoretical framework, pedagogical content knowledge, which was proposed in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER FIVE:

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher introduces the analysis of data in an attempt to answer the research question of how teachers teach reading in English Home Language in Grade 4 in a specific case study. In the previous chapter the data that were collected were presented and the data collection methods were identified. The theoretical framework, pedagogical content knowledge, as stated in Chapter Two, was used to clarify the main research question and three sub-questions in Chapter Five.

Main research question: How is reading currently taught in Grade 4 English Home Language?

Sub-research questions:

- What guidelines for teaching reading are recommended by the Western Cape Education Department for Grade 4 English Home Language?

- What are the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language?

- How do teachers assist struggling readers?

In the first section (5.2. Data analysis), all the datasets were analysed. This included the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, the Adjusted Teaching Plan and the Reading Strategies and Norms document, which aimed to answer what guidelines for teaching reading were recommended by the Western Cape Education Department for Grade 4 English Home Language. Second, the lesson observations were analysed to determine how teachers taught reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. Last, the interviews were analysed to establish teachers' experience of teaching reading, which included the challenges they faced and how they assisted struggling readers. In the analysis of each dataset, the researcher derived codes from each dataset, which were then categorised and identified as themes. In the second section (5.3. Discussion of themes), the researcher discussed each theme (reading strategies; contextual challenges; the guidelines from policymakers; teacher's knowledge of teaching reading and assisting struggling readers) and referred back to the literature in Chapter Two.

5.2 Data analysis

To understand how reading is taught in Grade 4 English Home Language, the data were analysed using the respective data sets:

- Dataset 1 – document analysis consisting of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document; the Adjusted Teaching Plans (ATPs) and the Reading Strategies and Norms Document offered by the WCED for their Reading Strategy 2020–2025 programme.
- Dataset 2 – lesson observations, and
- Dataset 3 – semi-structured individual interviews

The document analysis, which included the CAPS document (DBE, 2011b), issued by policymakers, assisted the researcher to determine what the WCED requires from Grade 4 English Home Language teachers. From the lesson observations, the researcher could gather information about how the curriculum prescribed by the Department was implemented. This provided the researcher with data about how the teachers taught reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. Last, the interviews disclosed the participants' level of experience, perceptions and views about teaching reading.

The researcher analysed the data by means of thematic analysis, which Braun and Clarke (2012:57) define as "a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set". The researcher started the data analysis process by analysing the document prescribed by the Department of Basic Education. Then, the data collected from the semi-structured individual interviews and the lessons observations were analysed and compared with the policy document. Figure 5.1 outlines the steps that the researcher followed throughout the data analysis process.

Data Analysis Process

1	2	3	4	5
READING AND TRANSCRIPTION	**CODING AND CATEGORISATION**	**IDENTIFIED THEMES**	**PRESENTED DATA FOR DISCUSSION**	**DISCUSS THEMES**
Gain an idea of the data collected and to select relevant data from various sources.	Identify units of meaning from each data set for coding purposes and to identify categories based on the codes.	Develop themes for discussion and interpretation.	Present the data which forms the sub-themes.	Present more comprehensive data and engage in disucssion to gain insight into the comments and remarks.

In the first step, the purpose was to gain insight into all the data collected, and to select, minimise and organise data from the various sources according to their relevance and suitability. In the second step, the researcher identified meaning from each set for coding purposes and attempted to recognise categories based on the codes. The third step aimed to develop discussion and analysis. In the fourth step, the goal was to present the data which underpinned the key themes. Finally, in the fifth step, the aim was to present more thorough data and to engage in meaningful discussion to comprehend the findings.

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 display the themes, categories and codes drawn from the policy documents, which were the Grade 4 English Home Language CAPS (DBE, 2011b) and ATPs (DBE, 2020). Table 5.3 presents the codes, categories and themes obtained from the lesson observations conducted by the researcher. Table 5.4 illustrates the data collected from the interviews with teachers, and Table 5.5 displays the data collected from the officials at the Western Cape Education Department.

The researcher highlighted specific script sections and focused on phrases that matched the codes. A specific colour was given to each code, and related phrases were highlighted using a similar colour. The researcher identified these themes by reverting to the research questions. The researcher analysed the data and formed codes by identifying the answers in the interviews that appeared most frequently. As the researcher assessed the data, relevant information was organised and arranged to develop categories. Furthermore, these categories were combined, based on similarities, to create themes. A thorough data analysis was completed to determine key patterns and perceptions relating to teaching approaches in teaching reading.

5.2.1 Dataset 1: Policy documents

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Grade 4 English Home Language was examined to gain information regarding the policies and guidelines for teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language in South Africa. This document was analysed to determine whether the curriculum guides teachers on how to teach reading to Grade 4 English Home Language learners. The researcher was guided by the the research objectives to determine the policy and approaches relevant to the teaching of reading.

The policy documents were analysed to determine common themes associated with teachers' teaching strategies when teaching reading. First, the researcher read the document thoroughly, noting all main points related to how reading should be taught. A variety of colours were then used to emphasise and comment on important sections of information.

Once this process was completed, the researcher coded the data by identifying specific themes presented in the policy document and allocated each table or concept to one of these categories. Determining specific themes made it possible to identify common themes relating to the teaching of reading and the strategies used by teachers.

After the data from the policy documents were collected and coded, the data were analysed for recurring themes and links to teachers' teaching strategies when teaching reading. The final process ended by studying how different categories were connected, identifying patterns or common themes in the data.

Table 5.1: Data analysis of the CAPS document

Codes derived from CAPS document	Category	Themes
- Build on the foundation set in Grades R to 3 - Use shared reading the beginning of Grade 4 to guide learners into this phase - Use guided group reading and independent/pair reading methods and gradually get learners to do more and more independent reading. - Encourage your learners to do independent reading in any spare time that they have. - You will also set a variety of comprehension activities to ensure that learners understand what they read.	- Prior knowledge - Shared reading - Group guided reading - Independent reading - Comprehension skills	Reading strategies

Table 5.2: Data analysis of the Annual Teaching Plan

Codes derived from ATPs	Categories	Themes
Reading phases	Pre-reading: prediction During reading: read aloud group guided independent reading Post-reading	Reading strategies

Table 5.3: Data analysis of WCED Reading Strategy 2020–2025 programme

Codes derived from WCED Reading Strategy 2020-2025	Categories	Themes
Strategies and sub-skills	Use pre-reading, reading and post-reading strategies WCED language strategy Pillars of the reading strategy by WCED - adaption - differentiation - multilevel learning - learning styles	Reading strategies

Once the data were analysed, the researcher categorised the most frequent answers into categories and derived themes from them. The researcher identified reading strategies as a main theme within the policy documents, because it appeared frequently in all three documents. Emphasis is placed on reading strategies in these guidelines for teachers. It is evident that these documents provide strategies for teachers on how to teach reading.

5.2.2 Dataset 2: Lesson observations

Data were collected by observing teachers while they conducted reading lessons. The researcher recorded data from the lesson observations by taking notes. Notes were made separately in a journal about the introduction to the lesson, and about the learners' engagement in the lesson and the interactions between the learners and the teacher.

The researcher used a predetermined observation schedule (see Appendix C) to conduct the lesson observations. The observation schedule identified the actions of the participants being studied, and the researcher used these categories to decode the data and to develop it into themes which consisted of reading strategies; contextual challenges; teachers' knowledge; policy guidelines and assisting struggling readers, found in Chapter Five.

Once the lesson observations were completed, the researcher interpreted the data on each observation schedule to identify patterns and trends among the eight participant teachers. This included finding similar actions coded into similar categories or studying how teachers' actions differed. The researcher identified links between the research questions and the observations.

Table 5.4: Data analysis of lesson observations

Codes derived from lesson observations	Categories	Themes
- Identify new and difficult words - Teacher read the text aloud first and learners follow - Learners read aloud individually or in pairs - Visual cues - Identify the title of the text - Whole class read aloud together - Each row read a paragraph together - Teacher asked learners questions about the text - Summarising - Skimming	- Pre-reading - During reading - Post reading	Reading strategies

5.2.3 Dataset 3: Interviews

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with eight participants. Three teachers from School A and five teachers from School B were interviewed during in-person interviews.

The researcher then used the data collected from the interviews to develop themes by identifying and categorising common perspectives that appeared.

The first step was to transcribe the audio-recorded interviews manually by listening to the recordings and typing them out. Second, the data were coded by the researcher by highlighting answers that appeared frequently in multiple participants' answers. During the next stage the researcher categorised these codes and established themes from the codes and the categories. The researcher employed the method of Saldanha (2009) for coding data. The codes were grouped into categories, and similar categories were grouped together to form themes. Last, the researcher tabled the coded data, and the trends and patterns found were used to classify the data into categories and finally, to derive themes, as shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Data analysis of interviews with teachers

Codes derived from the interviews with teachers	Categories	Themes
• Learners speak Afrikaans/isiXhosa at home and learn in English at school • Difficulty pronouncing and spelling words • Did not learn fully how to read in the Foundation Phase • Parents not involve	• Lack of support from Foundation Phase teachers to struggling readers in the Foundation Phase; teachers pick this up during the baseline assessments in the first term • Word recognition problems • Diverse language backgrounds	Contextual challenges
• Completed training on how to teach reading in undergraduate studies • Did not receive training on how to teach reading • Did not attend any workshops offered by WCED on how to teach reading • Completed reading course during postgraduate studies • Did not know about any workshops offered by WCED on how to teach reading	• Teaching qualifications • Teaching experience • Professional development	Teachers' knowledge of teaching reading
• Follow the pace of the learners and pay more attention if they are not ready to proceed • Not very descriptive, does not explain how to teach reading and offers no guidelines • Not helpful regarding how to teach reading • Basically tells you what to do per week and per term only • Not enough time to complete the curriculum • There are helpful tips and recommendations	• CAPS Document Grade 4 English Home Language • ATPs • WCED Reading Strategies	Guidelines by WCED
• Identify difficult words in the text • Derive meaning of the words	• Word recognition • Translation • Group reading	Reading strategies

Codes derived from the interviews with teachers	Categories	Themes
- Learners can make sentences with the difficult words - Translate the difficult words to Afrikaans - Group reading first and then individually - Pre-reading: learners look at pictures and the title and decide what they think of it - Teacher read aloud first and then explains the story in context including the meaning of difficult words - Learners read in pairs - Focus on the theme of the text and use it as a basis to understand the text - Using real-life examples to help learners understand the text - Group reading takes place	- Visual aids - Read aloud - Paired reading - Theme	
- Extra story time with class. - Intervention classes on a Friday when the teacher reads texts with a group of struggling readers and completes comprehension questions with them based on the text. - Have significant insight into what the learners are struggling with. - Repeating rules, repeating combinations of sounds. - I record all our summaries before the exam, and send it to them digitally, especially to those who can't read. They are able to listen to the work instead of having to read it. - Pair struggling readers with strong readers.	- struggling readers - intervention classes	Assisting struggling readers

The researcher proceeded to analyse the data from the interviews with teachers and lesson observations per teacher and found that there were elements which appeared continuously in the interviews with teachers and their lesson observations. The researcher categorised these elements and classified them into themes. The researcher identified the following themes: reading strategies; contextual challenges; teacher's knowledge of teaching reading; guidelines by WCED and finally, assisting struggling readers.
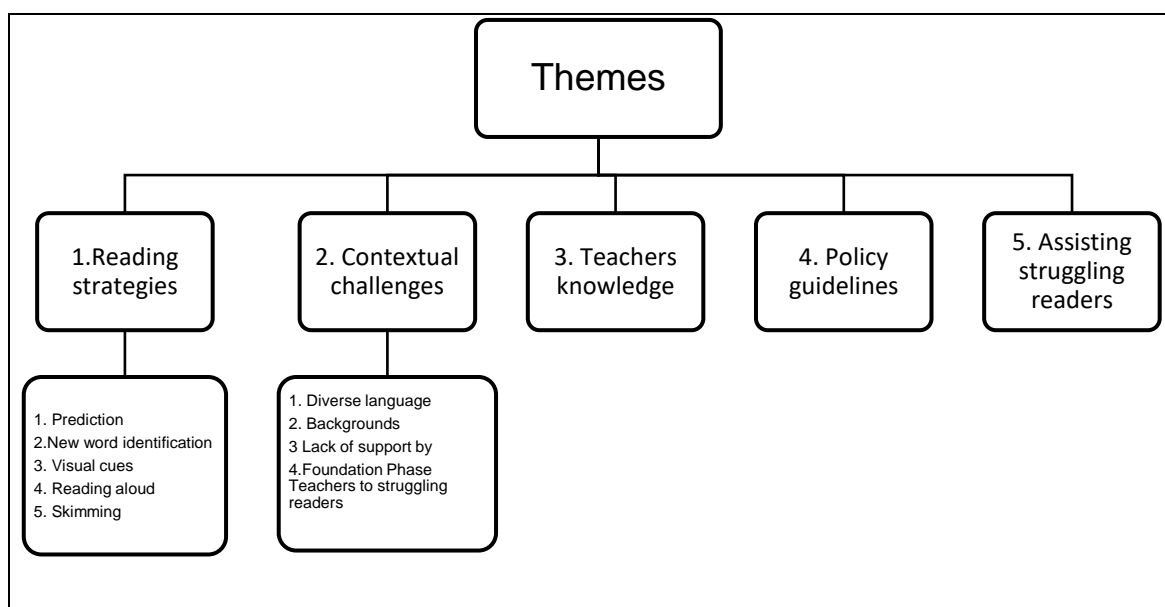
Figure 5.2: Themes identified from the data sets

Figure 5.2 illustrates the themes that were identified from the datasets. There were sub-themes identified from the main themes.

The researcher identified these themes by reverting to the research questions. The researcher analysed the data and formed codes by identifying the answers in the interviews that appeared most frequently. Thereafter, the researcher identified the most frequent teaching strategies observed during the lessons and identified any guidelines found in the policy documents that corresponded with the findings in the interviews. Once these findings were coded, the researcher categorised the findings into shorter categories and developed themes from these categories if a common pattern was observed from the data analysis.

5.3 Discussion of themes

The researcher analysed and tabulated the codes, categories and themes that were derived from the datasets in the study, as indicated above. In the sections that follow, each of identifed themes will be discussed in to provide a detailed data analysis.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Reading strategies

The main research question asked how Grade 4 teachers taught reading. Since this looks at teachers' teaching pedagogies, the researcher conducted lesson observations and found that teachers employed specific reading strategies during these lessons. According to the English Home Language CAPS documents for Intermediate Phase for Grades 4 to 6, teachers should use pre-reading, reading and post-reading phases to assist learners to comprehend a text. During the interviews (dataset 3) the participants shared their teaching strategies when teaching reading. Most participants included the identification of words as part of their pre-

reading activities, reading aloud to the learners, and having them read aloud in pairs or as a class.

The researcher found that the participants identified new words and skimming during the pre-reading phase. Teachers had learners make predictions about the text during the reading phase by pausing to ask learners what they thought would happen. Last, during the post-reading phase, teachers asked learners basic comprehension questions about the reading text and showed them pictures and videos that related to the text.

However, Teacher 3 provided insight into his preferred strategy when teaching reading:

> *I read the text myself first to gain understanding of what the message is in the story, as every story has a moral lesson and then I focus on that and use it as a basis to understand the text. My resources and props will include those things and I try to make what they have read a reality.*

In observing Teacher 3, the researcher found that Teacher 3 did not incorporate any of the reading strategies recommended by the CAPS document or ATP for Grade 4. Teacher 5 also did not incorporate any of the reading strategies recommended by policymakers and instead had her own strategy, called the "four-finger strategy", by having the learners determine the 'when', 'where', 'what', 'who' of the story. Neither the CAPS document, the ATPs nor the WCED Reading Strategy document recommend this particular strategy. The teacher's use of a strategy not recommended by policymakers serves as indication that the teacher took initiative by implementing a strategy of her own instead of relying solely on the CAPS document to guide her. This finding also tells the researcher that the teacher is aware of other teaching methods other than what is recommended in the CAPS documents. The researcher found that the use of the four-finger reading strategy was effective as learners were aware of this strategy and knew what each finger symbolised, and they could identify the elements of the four-finger strategy in the reading text that was read during the lesson.

The section that follows identifies the reading strategies which the researcher witnessed being practised most frequently during the lesson observations among the various participants and refers back to the data sets and the literature about these reading strategies. These reading strategies are: prediction; visual cues; identifying new words; reading aloud and skimming.

5.3.1.1 Prediction

The CAPS document (DBE, 2011b:10) recommends that, during the pre-reading phase, the teacher and learners should make predictions about the text. It was stated in Chapter Two (section 2.3.3) that making predictions about a text can assist the reader to focus their attention on the main ideas in the text (Liou, 2021:1). There were teachers who started the reading phase with this process.

During the lesson observation with Teacher 8, the researcher found that the teacher asked the learners to predict what would happen in the rest of the story after reading the first paragraph of the story. Teacher 8 stated during the interview that she has learners predict what the story is about based on the title. During the lesson observations the researcher found that Teacher 8 did, in fact, use prediction by having learners predict what the story was about based on the title of the text.

5.3.1.2 Visual cues

The researcher found that Teacher 2 included pictures in her lesson, which she projected from her computer, and Teacher 3 previewed a YouTube video to develop learners' understanding of the text. According to the literature, visualisation and prediction are beneficial when aiming to understand a reading text. This is confirmed by Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016:235), who state that readers can comprehend a text easier when they have a visual representation of a narrative text. These teachers' use of prediction and visual imagery prior to reading the text is an indication that their learners had a better chance of understanding the reading text and that the teachers see the potential benefits of using visual cues and prediction to facilitate understanding a text.

Based on the interviews, Teacher 8 explained the following:

> First, I start by identifying the title of the story; thereafter, I have learners assume or guess what the story is about just by reading the title. Then we look at any pictures provided to gain a better idea of the text.

The researcher identified during the lesson observation that Teacher 8 did, in fact, use visual cues to develop learners' understanding of the text prior to reading. It is evident that Teacher 8 is aware of the benefits of using visual aids to develop learners' understanding and that the school has the facilities for teachers to use these types of resources in their teaching practices as these two teachers are both at School B, which is a former Model C school.

Teacher 2 stated the following:

> During the pre-reading, learners must look at pictures and the title and decide what they think about it.

However, this contradicts what the researcher observed in the lesson observation as the researcher found that the teacher did not include any pictures for learners to view during the lesson and the reading text they were reading did not include any pictures. The teacher may not have had the resources to show learners pictures as the school has a lack of resources such as computers and printers.

5.3.1.3 Identification of new words

Identifying new words is offered as a guideline in the CAPS document (DBE, 2011b:10). Second, the Reading Norms for Intermediate Phase also recommends "inferring meaning of unfamiliar words" as a reading strategy. This is exactly what the teacher participants did. Before and during the reading process, the teacher would have the learners identify new and difficult words or the teachers would pick out the difficult and new words from a text themselves with their learners and the teacher would explain the meaning of these words verbally while learners listened.

Teacher 1:

> First, we identify difficult words in the text. Then I give the meaning of the words; thereafter, the learners make sentences with the words. Sometimes I translate the words into Afrikaans.

After observing the lesson of Teacher 1, the researcher noticed that, before reading the text, Teacher 1 had placed new words from the text on flash cards to introduce the new words to the learners. The teacher also had the learners create sentences with these new words.

The fact that the researcher observed this strategy of word identification in all the lessons indicates that emphasis is placed on developing learners' vocabulary during reading lessons. There are benefits to identifying new and difficult words, as was discussed in Chapter Two, as part of section 2.2.5, where it was stated that learners learn to read by learning the relationship between sounds and letters (phonemic awareness) and then developing words and sentences. The word identification process aids in expanding learners' vocabulary and, by deriving the meaning of new words, learners have a greater understanding of the text they have read.

5.3.1.4 Reading aloud

Another reading strategy that was frequent among participants was to read aloud to their learners and thereafter the learners would read aloud individually, in pairs or in groups.

Teacher 6 explained:

> I read aloud once or twice to them and then I give the learners an opportunity to read the text aloud to the class row-by-row. This is how I can see who can and cannot read.

The researcher observed Teacher 6 and found that the teacher read aloud to the class first and then gave learners an opportunity to read aloud as a group according to the rows they sat in, while the rest of the learners followed. Teacher 7 also stated that she read aloud to her learners and, upon observing her, the researcher found that she did exactly that.

As mentioned previously in the review of literature in Chapter Two, section 2.3.2, Kassim (2019:87) acknowledges that reading aloud is an important strategy as it encourages learners

to read and consequently improves their reading comprehension which improves their literacy competency later. The Adjusted Teaching Plan (DBE, 2023:3) recommends that teachers use reading aloud as a reading methodology to prepare for the read aloud assessment.

5.3.1.5 Skimming

Skimming was identified as another one of the reading strategies used by teachers. The researcher noticed during the observations that Teacher 4 had used skimming as part of their pedagogy. In section 2.3.2 of Chapter Two, Ngoc (2002:197) states that skimming allows learners to predict the purpose of the text, the main topic and possibly a few supporting ideas. All the policy documents analysed in this study, the CAPS, ATP and WCED Reading Strategy and Norms 2020-2025, recommend employing skimming during reading lessons.

Teacher 8 stated that they asked learners questions orally about the text to determine whether the learners had understood the text they had read. Teacher 4 also stated that they would ask the class the four-W questions ("what, when, where and who") to determine whether learners comprehend the text. The process of asking learners questions after reading a text relates to the strategy "monitoring comprehension" introduced in section 2.3.3. This strategy aids in comprehension, as Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016:235) state that this strategy means that the reader is aware that they understand what they have read, and that the reader applies appropriate strategies to improve their comprehension of a text.

5.3.2 Teaching method: Teacher-centred

The researcher observed that most of the teachers conducted teacher-centred lessons. The teacher introduced the lesson, led the lesson and learners had minimal involvement other than identifying words and reading aloud. Al-Zu'be (2013:25) defines the teacher-centred method as the teacher having control over what is taught and under which circumstances.

During the lesson observations, the researchers found that all the learners were sitting organised in alphabetical order according to the class list in their desks. The teacher ensured that they were listening and were not talking among themselves while reading. The learners read with the teachers from a textbook. These are all characteristics of a teacher-centred lesson (Toh, 1994:13).

When the researcher interviewed the participants, she asked the teachers how they taught reading. The participants stated that they would introduce the lesson by reading aloud while learners followed. The teacher would ask the learners questions and explain things to them from the text which left very little time for learners to engage with the text themselves. Therefore, the teaching method of the majority of the participants can be deemed as teacher centred. In Chapter Two, a learner-centred approach is described as happening in lessons where the learners and the teacher have equal time to talk during the lesson, with the learners

perhaps having even more time to talk than the teacher (Toh, 1994:13). In order to establish a learner-centred approach, the classroom environment needs to be designed in a manner in which learners have freedom of movement by choosing where they want to sit and read. Second, there should be resources in the classroom to foster a reading culture, such as a reading nook including diverse reading materials to create a harmonious atmosphere for reading. Thereafter, learners should have the liberty to read genres that interest them and which they can relate to, whether that is fiction, nonfiction or graphic novels. Last, during the reading lesson, teachers could divide learners into groups and assign roles to each learner in the group (summariser, questioner, and speaker) in small groups to discuss and share a text which promotes accountability and fosters deeper understanding of the reading text.

5.4 Theme 2: Contextual challenges

The aim of research sub-question 2 (What are the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language?) was to explore teachers' perceptions of the challenges of teaching reading. Participants at both schools felt that the learners' diverse language backgrounds was a factor. Second, teachers stated that they felt that learners failed to grasp fully the ability to read in Grade 3 and that, upon reaching Grade 4, they continued to struggle to read. Basically, they do not know how to read and cannot pronounce or spell words. Last, the researcher observed that the teachers had about 34 to 38 learners in a class, which shows that the classes are too large for one teacher to pay special attention to struggling readers. The section that follows will expand on these challenges.

5.4.1 Diverse language backgrounds

South Africa is a diverse country with 11 official languages (and sign language). In the post-apartheid era, the government has endeavoured to promote inclusivity, specifically with languages in schools through the National Language in Education Policy (NLP) (DBE, 1997). It was stated in Chapter Two that the NLP requires that learners should be taught throught the medium of their home language or mother tongue up to at least Grade 3. Once learners reach Grade 4, they transition from being taught and learning in their home languages to having English as the language of instruction (Phala & Hugo, 2016:170).

Based on the interviews with the teacher participants, it was found that one of the biggest challenges when teaching reading is the issue of learners' mother tongue language being different to their Language of Learning (LoLT). Drawing on the findings of Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016:11), it was revealed that it is a challenge teaching learners how to read English if their mother tongue is not English. During the interviews, participants shared what challenges they experienced when teaching reading. Teacher 2 describes the issue with teaching learners from diverse language backgrounds:

Learners speak Afrikaans at home and the school's English Home Language curriculum's vocabulary is high and learners are not exposed to English at home.

After analysing the interview responses and comparing the literature in section 2.4.2, it is evident that when learners' home language is not English, it becomes a challenge for the teacher to teach them how to read in English Home Language. If a learner speaks Afrikaans or isiXhosa at home and their Language of Learning is English, there is a language barrier as the learner has a broader vocabulary and knowledge of their mother tongue which they speak at home, and limited knowledge of their Language of Learning, which is English in this case. Because of this, learners struggle to read in English. A further problem is that parents whose first language is not English, might struggle to assist learners with their reading as they themselves might have limited proficiency in English. As mentioned in section 2.4.2 (b), any child who cannot use the language with which they are most familiar (usually the home language), is disadvantaged and unlikely to perform to the best of their ability (Smith, 2012:12).

5.4.2 Lack of support by Foundation Phase Teachers to struggling readers

The challenge indicated by two of the teacher participants was that learners are not able to read when they enter the Intermediate Phase at the beginning of their Grade 4 year. This may be due to a lack of reading practice in Grade 3 owing to time constraints, and also to COVID-19, which saw schools being closed for long periods of time.

As mentioned in section 2.4.2, Verbeek (2011:12) conducted a study on the Foundation Phase curriculum and found that the Foundation Phase CAPS curriculum focused primarily on the use of phonic cues in reading texts. The CAPS document for Foundation Phase allocates the following amount of time to phonics and reading:

Table 5.6: Total time spent on reading and phonics in Grade 3 (DBE, 2011b:9)

Grade 3 Home Language		Total per Week
Reading and phonics	Phonics	15 minutes per day for 4 days (1 hour)
	Shared reading	20 minutes per day for 3 days (1 hour)
	Group reading	30 minutes per day (2 groups each for 15 minutes) for 5 days (2 hours 30 minutes)

In the CAPS document for the Foundation Phase (DBE, 2011a:4), a section is allocated to phonemic awareness, explaining what it is and how it can be practised in reading lessons. Verbeek (2011:13) states that this over-emphasis on phonemic awareness prevents the development of reading for meaning, specifically in the early years of school and Hugo (2011:140) supports this claim (see section 2.4.2) that only using the phonics method to learn to read delays the whole reading process, which could lead to failure to understand what has been read.

The Grade 4 learners in this study were in Grades 1, 2 and 3 during the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in school and classroom time being disrupted. This prevented the full curriculum from being completed. The curriculum was narrowed down for teachers to follow in order to complete the curriculum within a year owing to the time lost during the nationwide lockdown. This may be a factor that contributed to why some of these learners did not learn to read during their years in the Foundation Phase. Learners in the Foundation Phase could therefore be progressing to the next grade without meeting the pass requirements fully and without having acquired all the necessary skills needed to read at the appropriate level. A Western Cape Education Department Circular (WCED, 2014) states the following regarding retaining learners in a grade:

> *Should a learner in Grades 1 to 3 not meet the minimum guidelines in all three of the required subjects for a second time in the Foundation Phase, such a learner may only be retained once in the Foundation Phase, excluding Grade R, in order to prevent the learner being retained in this phase for longer than four years.*

Therefore, learners are not allowed to fail more than once in a phase, regardless of their lack of skills and abilities. This has the implication that Intermediate Phase teachers are then tasked with supporting these struggling readers as learners are not at the reading level they should be at in Grade 4. Grade 4 teachers may not have the necessary training to teach reading. The researcher found in interviews with the participants that the participants did not receive any training specifically on how to teach reading. In the section that follows, the teacher's knowledge of how to teach reading is discussed.

5.5 Theme 3: Teachers' knowledge of teaching reading

This section focuses on the teachers' knowledge of teaching reading. The researcher wanted to find out what knowledge teachers had about teaching reading and whether they had received training or learnt about teaching reading. This study used the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) of Shulman (1986) as the theoretical framework. In Section 2.13, Sajeena (2021:323) states that PCK is having knowledge of what, when, why and why and how to teach utilising a range of knowledge of good teaching practice and experience, in this case reading in English Home Language, and the most useful forms of representation of the topic to make it understandable for others.

Table 5.7 summarises the teaching experience and training of the eight participants:

Table 5.7: Participants' experience

Participant	Years teaching English Home Language	Years teaching Grade 4	Received training on how to teach reading
1	10 years	8 years	Yes

2	3 years	3 years	Yes
3	6 years	6 years	Yes
4	1 year	3 months	Yes
5	5 years	5 years	No
6	3 years	3 years	Yes
7	12 years	15 years	No
8	17 years	17 years	No

It is evident that most of the teachers interviewed and observed in this study have experience of teaching Grade 4 English Home Language. Three teachers, however, have not received training in the teaching of reading. Most of the teachers received training to teach reading during their undergraduate studies, whereas Teacher 8 had completed a postgraduate qualification which assisted in teaching Grade 4 learners reading comprehension. Teacher 8 said:

> *When I completed my honours degree, I had a module about how to teach Grade 4 learners how to read with comprehension.*

However, this finding is in contrast with the findings in section 2.4.2 in which it was stated that the National Reading Strategy (NRS) (DBE, 2008:8) document found that multiple South African teachers have a limited perception of teaching literacy and reading although they may have received some form of training during their undergraduate studies. Mather and Land (2014:208) conducted a study which explored what three Intermediate Phase English First Additional Language teachers understood about reading and teaching reading, and the strategies they used to develop learners' reading skills and found that teachers were not made aware of specific methods to teach reading and, if they had been made aware of any methods, there was a lack of discourse to explain what those methods entailed. During the interviews, Teacher 8 said:

> *Yes, we did a brief section on how to teach reading in my undergraduate studies.*

Teacher 5 stated the following:

> *I did a PGCE. There was a small component of teaching reading but it did not go in depth on teaching reading.*

The statements above show that during teachers' undergraduate studies they were taught how to teach reading. Section 2.4.2 reported on the study by Steinke and Wildsmith-Cromarty (2021:37), which was designed to capture how teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) can influence literacy acquisition at Foundation Phase level, specifically in Grade 3 and

4. The study found that in South Africa the current pre-service teacher training syllabus is inadequate to prepare teachers to teach reading effectively in the earlier grades.

The researcher found that four teachers in this study from School A had attended a reading strategy workshop offered by the school a number of years before, which may have improved their ability to teach reading. School A had taken it upon themselves to train their teachers on how to teach reading.

School A is a former Model C school with resources and facilities to host such workshops, whereas School B does not have opportunities of this kind for its teachers. As mentioned in section 2.4, the National Reading Strategy (DBE, 2008:8) document claims that limited facilities and poor conditions for teaching and learning, such as poor instructional resources, make it more difficult to provide a quality education. Second, a lack of resources makes it difficult to train teachers in new methodologies, since workshops require financial resources.

Participants also stated that they were unaware of any workshops/programmes offered by the Western Cape Education Department. However, during the interview conducted with the Language Specialist from WCED, the participant stated that the department "offered professional development workshops and training sessions for teachers focused on effective strategies for teaching reading".

5.6 Theme 4: Guidelines from policy documents

The researcher analysed three official policy documents, i.e., the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for Grade 4 English Home Language (DBE, 2011b), the Adjusted Teaching Plan for Grade 4 English Home Language (DBE, 2020) and finally, the Western Cape Reading Strategy 2020–2025 (WCED, 2021), specifically the Grade 4 English Home Language section. In Table 4.14 of Chapter 4, the researcher also asked the eight participants whether they found the guidelines from the CAPS document helpful. These documents were analysed because teachers are expected to follow these guidelines since they comprise the official national curriculum directive of the South African government. These documents indicate what genres teachers must read with learners, when they must conduct these lessons, what strategies to use and also how many hours of teachers must spend on reading.

After close reading of the data, the researcher found that the three policy documents were similar. The ATP was intended to be a narrowed down version of CAPS; however, the information pertaining to reading was similar to the information in the CAPS document. Second, the WCED Reading Strategy document was intended to serve as a new guideline on how to teach reading, but the researcher found that it also contained similar information to that found in the CAPS document. These two documents lacked originality and new ideas. This shows that the policymakers have not consulted new literature or conducted research to inform

practice in order to offer new ideas and guidance to teachers on how to teach reading but have merely duplicated large sections of these documents.

Most of the participants stated that they did not find the CAPS document helpful. Teacher 4 stated the following:

> *It basically just tells us what to do per week per term. CAPS is just a guideline and does not go in depth into teaching reading.*

Teacher 2 commented:

> *No, it is not very descriptive; it does not explain how to teach reading and offers no guidelines.*

In the interviews, teachers also stated that they did not follow the CAPS document because they felt that it was not realistic. Participants stated that they would like to work at the pace and on the level at which the learners are; however, teachers stated that the CAPS document does not allow for that. The CAPS document is rigid in the sense that teachers need to finish certain tasks and teach specific skills in a set timeframe prescribed in the document. This poses a problem as learners may not yet have fully grasped a skill.

These findings are supported by the findings of a study by Winberg et al. (2020:19), discussed in section 2.4.3, that a study of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy for Grade 4–7 found that CAPS failed to supply sufficient guidance for improving reading and that the "prescribed programme of assessment is not supported by the research literature on reading". The guidance offered in the CAPS document does not offer well-defined and well-researched guidance to teachers.

5.7 Theme 5: Assisting struggling readers

During the semi-structured interviews, the researcher found that both schools offered reading intervention programmes after school to learners who struggled to read. It is stated in section 2.5 of Chapter Two that teachers need to be prepared to identify struggling readers. Most of the participants stated that they conducted baseline assessments with learners at the start of the first term to determine their reading ability. When teachers have conducted these baseline assessments, they are able to assist learners once they know what learners struggle with when reading. Teachers are then able to help struggling readers improve their reading skills.

Interventions should be offered by schools to struggling readers to improve their reading ability, as mentioned in section 2.5. These intervention programmes need to include certain principles, which are summarised by Meiklejohn et al. (2021:1) as having reading volume, reading

appropriate texts, providing learners with explicit and personalised instruction and coherent and balanced reading lessons and activities.

The researcher found during the interviews with Teacher 4 and Teacher 7 that both schools had reading interventions with learners which took place after school hours. The researcher learnt that teachers were assisting learners struggling to read in the classroom by pairing weak readers with strong readers when conducting reading lessons. This strategy is supported by Le Cordeur (2010:84), who argues that assisted reading helps to improve reading fluency. By having learners reading to each other, it becomes a learner-centred teaching method. Having a learner who is a stronger reader assist a weaker reader is what Vygotsky calls the *more knowledgeable other*. McLeod (2024:4) defines *more knowledgeable other* as a reference to someone who has a higher level of ability or greater understanding than the learner regarding a particular task, process, or concept.

5.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has analysed the findings on how reading is currently taught in English Home Language. The researcher used triangulation to identify recurring themes in all the datasets that were used in this study. The researcher reintroduced the main research question and sub-questions in section 5.1. In section 5.2 the researcher illustrated the themes from each dataset in Table 5.1 to 5.5 with the codes, categories and themes. The researcher identified and discussed the themes in section 5.3 to 5.7.

The researcher found in the lesson observations that teachers adhered to the teaching strategies recommended by the CAPS and ATPS for teaching reading. These strategies included prediction, visual clues, identifying new words, reading aloud, and skimming. However, the findings from the interviews revealed that some of the participants did not adhere strictly to the CAPS document. Participants stated that they found that the curriculum was not realistic. Participants could not meet learners at the learning level where they were at because the CAPS document does not allow for that. Teachers are mandated to complete specific topics and concepts within a specific timeframe, according to the CAPS document, the CAPS document does not make concessions for learners who struggle to grasp a topic or concept. Therefore, this poses a problem as teachers are forced to continue teaching new topics or content even if the learner has not grasped the previous topic or content.

Second, contextual challenges were identified, such as diverse language backgrounds and a lack of support in the Foundation Phase. The data findings showed that, when the mother tongue of learners is not English, it poses a challenge when teaching reading as learners have a limited vocabulary and limited prior knowledge and experience of learning to read and write in English. In section 5.5 the researcher discussed data about teachers' knowledge of teaching

reading. The researcher found that teachers were qualified, had experience in the subject, and had knowledge of teaching reading.

The fourth theme was guidelines from policymakers and it was found that the CAPS curriculum document was not realistic because it expected teachers to work at a pace that exceeded the level at which the learners were. The ATPs and the WCED Reading Strategy 2020–2025 did not offer any new guidelines as they repeated the guidelines offered in the CAPS curriculum. It appears that the curriculum is outdated, and different guidelines should be offered per policy document.

Participants conducted baseline reading assessments with learners at the beginning of the first term to determine what the learners' reading proficiency was and to identify struggling readers in order to assist them. Struggling readers were assisted by means of intervention classes offered by all of the Grade 4 English Home Language class teachers at the school once per week. These intervention classes differ from normal classes, since teachers assist only their struggling readers in these sessions and can pay more specific attention to their needs since these intervention classes have fewer learners.

The study has revealed that teachers are using various teaching methods when teaching reading, specifically teaching methods recommended by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Document and Adjusted Teaching Plans. However, teachers experienced challenges when teaching reading, such as learners' mother tongues that were different to English Home Language. The policy documents were studied and the researcher found that there was a lack of new ideas presented on how to teach reading in the Adjusted Teaching Plan and the Western Cape Reading Strategies and Norms 2020–2025 document. Last, despite the challenges faced, teachers continued to assist learners by offering intervention programmes after school hours.

CHAPTER SIX:

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this study was to investigate how reading was taught in Grade 4 English Home Language in two selected schools. In addition, the study aimed to establish what reading guidelines for teaching reading were recommended by the Department of Basic Education and Western Cape Education Department for Grade 4 English Home Language. This study also aimed to identify the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. Last, it aimed to determine how teachers assisted struggling readers.

This chapter starts with an overview of the study. Second, this chapter discusses the research questions and the objectives of this study. It summarises the main findings and conclusions, while offering recommendations for future research on how to teach reading effectively in Grade 4 English Home Language. The chapter also identified limitations of the study and provided suggestions for further research.

The main research question for this study is: How is reading currently taught in Grade 4 English Home Language? The sub-questions that were considered are:

2. What guidelines for teaching reading are recommended by the Western Cape Education Department for Grade 4 English Home Language?

3. What are the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language?

4. How do teachers assist struggling readers?

6.2 Overview of the study

Chapter One provided an introduction and overview of the study. The chapter started by discussing the PIRLS 2016 and 2021 report findings, which found that Grade 4 learners could not read for meaning and performed the lowest in the PIRLS tests internationally. The chapter also discussed the value of learning how to read and the role that teachers play in teaching learners how to read. The chapter continued by discussing the importance of the CAPS document in teaching and learning to read. Furthermore, the chapter discussed reading improvement intervention programmes that were established in South Africa to address the urgency of the literacy crisis in an attempt to improve the literacy performance.

The literature review in Chapter Two investigated what the practice of reading entails and how reading ability is achieved. The literature review continued by outlining the teaching models and how they look in a classroom setting. Furthermore, Chapter Two discussed the various reading strategies which can be applied when reading to understand a text. The literature review also discussed the techniques that teachers can apply when teaching reading. This chapter also explained the various phases that occur when reading and what teachers can do with learners during each reading phase. Then, the chapter discussed South Africa's participation and performance in standardised tests such as the Annual National Assessments (ANA) and the Progress in International Reading Study (PIRLS). Chapter Two also discussed the theoretical framework used in this study, which is pedagogical knowledge, as proposed by Shuman (1986). Last, the chapter concluded by discussing the challenges faced during the teaching of reading.

Chapter Three, the research methodology chapter of this study, discussed the research paradigm, approach and design, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations related to the investigation into how reading is taught in Grade 4 English Home Language. The researcher used an interpretative research paradigm within a qualitative approach. Trustworthiness was ensured by using multiple sources to ensure the quality of the data. The data collected were analysed using thematic analysis and interpreted by using the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) framework.

Chapter Four presented the three datasets, which included interviews, lesson observations and document analysis. The first dataset, document analysis, included analysing policy documents such as the CAPS, ATPs and the WCED Reading Strategy and Norms 2020–2025 to gain an understanding of the guidelines these documents offer to teachers on how to teach reading. The second dataset, lesson observations, involved observing teachers during their reading lesson period to understand the techniques and teaching methods they used when teaching reading. For the third dataset, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers to gain an understanding of their experiences of and beliefs about how reading should be taught.

Chapter Five analysed the data that had been collected from the interviews, lesson observations and policy documents. In this chapter the common themes found in the policy documents, interviews and lesson observations were identified. The data were coded and categorised into themes. Data from the lesson observations were analysed and coded. Themes were then identified based on how teachers taught reading. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using the same coding process.

6.3 Discussion of findings

This study aimed to determine how teachers taught reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. The study also aimed to identify what guidelines were offered by policymakers on how to teach reading. Furthermore, the study attempted to determine the challenges teachers experienced when teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. Last, the study aimed to investigate how teachers assisted struggling readers.

In the lesson observations, the researcher found that teachers adhered to the teaching strategies recommended by the CAPS and ATPS for teaching reading. During the interviews, participants stated that they found that the curriculum was not realistic. The contextual challenges include learners' mother tongue not being English and this poses a challenge as learners have a limited vocabulary and limited prior knowledge and experience of learning to read and write in English. The researcher found that teachers were qualified, had experience in the subject, and had knowledge of teaching reading.

Upon completing the document analysis, the researcher found that the CAPS curriculum document was not realistic, since it expected teachers to work at a pace that exceeded the level at which the learners were able to operate. The ATPs and the WCED Reading Strategy 2020–2025 did not offer any new guidelines as they repeated the guidelines offered in the CAPS curriculum. The CAPS document mentions the reading strategies but does not define how the strategies should be applied. According to Winberg et al. (2020:7), CAPS fails to guide teachers on how to assist learners in acquiring the reading strategies. Furthermore, Winberg et al. (2020:5) state that the "CAPS document does not explicitly state the purposes, principles or definitions that underpin its approach to reading comprehension".

Last, the researcher aimed to find out how teachers assisted struggling readers. The findings revealed that struggling readers were assisted by means of intervention classes offered by the class teachers at the school once per week when teachers would read new reading texts with these learners and have them complete comprehension questions in their notebooks. The teachers did not reveal in the interviews whether this intervention programme was successful.

The findings of the study are presented in the section that follows. The researcher answers the research questions by providing a detailed explanation of how reading is taught in English Home Language, the experiences of teachers when teaching reading, and how struggling readers are supported.

6.3.1 Main research question

How is reading currently taught in Grade 4 English Home Language?

The study found that teachers used various teaching methods to teach reading. The participants used the guidelines stated in the CAPS document. These guidelines included having learners identify new and difficult words in a text, presenting visual cues such as videos and pictures, letting learners read aloud in groups, getting the learners to predict what the story was about just by looking at the title of the text and lastly, skimming to gain an idea of what the text was about. Most teachers were able to teach the bottom-up approach which included identifying new words, single sentences, paragraphs and phonemic awareness and vocabulary.

However, not all participants used these reading strategies as there was one participant who only used a method called the 4-finger strategy, which asked about the "what, where, when and who" of a text, and another participant who used the theme of a story to help learners understand the text. The study also found that the teachers' classroom pedagogy was very teacher centred, because it was observed that the teachers controlled the lesson and that learners' engagement in the lesson was limited.

Teachers were implementing the CAPS document guidelines as suggested. It was found during the interviews that the CAPS document is rigid in the sense that teachers need to finish certain tasks and teach specific skills in a set timeframe prescribed in the document. This poses a problem as teachers need to continue to a new topic or skill although learners may not have understood or be able to apply a skill yet.

The teaching strategies used in lessons were identified. The researcher identified teaching strategies recommended by the policy documents and found in the interviews that the participants' explanations of how they taught reading and what they were observed doing in the classroom were aligned. Overall, it can be said that the researcher achieved the aims of this study pertaining to the main research question. The research revealed that teachers used reading strategies such as skimming, visual cues and identifying new words in their teaching methods when teaching reading. These reading strategies are prescribed by the CAPS document.

6.3.2 Sub-question One

What guidelines for teaching reading are recommended by the Western Cape Education Department for Grade 4 English Home Language?

In order to answer this question, the researcher conducted a document analysis of the Grade 4 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, the Adjusted Teaching Plan and the Western Cape Reading Norms and Strategy 2020–2025 document. The study found that each document offered guidelines to teachers, such as an indication of the text genre teachers should read with learners, as well as the reading strategies teachers should use when teaching

reading and the number of hours teachers should spend reading with learners. Guidelines from the CAPS document were similar to the guidelines of the Adjusted Teaching Plan and the Western Cape Reading Norms and Strategy 2020–2025 document. The researcher had hoped to find different guidelines in a comparison of these documents. Since the researcher found that the CAPS document did not have explicit guidelines for how to teach reading, the researcher assumed that the ATPs and the Western Cape Reading Norms and Strategy 2020–2025 documents would have more explicit guidelines. The purpose of the Western Cape Reading Norms and Strategy 2020–2025 document was to address the literacy crisis in Western Cape schools; however, the guidelines offered in the document were a duplication of the guidelines offered in the CAPS document and the ATPs. The ATPs, which were a narrowed-down version of the CAPS document, also contained the same guidelines as the CAPS document.

Despite the guidelines offered in these documents, teachers in the study did not find the CAPS document realistic as the CAPS document did not allow teachers to work at the pace and level at which the learners could read. Teachers stated that the CAPS document was too rigid and that they had to work to finish specific skills in a set timeline, as stated in the document. Teachers are expected to continue to the next skill or topic instead of being able to spend more time on aspects the learners may not have mastered yet.

6.3.3 Sub-question Two

What are the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching reading in Grade 4 English Home Language?

It was found that, for most of the participants, the greatest challenge was to teach reading to learners whose mother tongue was not English. Teachers explained that learners who speak isiXhosa or Afrikaans at home struggle to read in English. A further problem is that parents whose mother tongue is not English, cannot assist learners with their reading as they are not proficient in English either. During the interviews, two of the teachers also stated that, even though learners completed Grade 3 successfully, some of them could not read.

The data revealed that Grade 4 learners are not able to read proficiently when they reach Grade 4. The CAPS document focuses mainly on the use of phonemic awareness in reading in Grade 3, with less focus on reading for comprehension. This might be why these Grade 4 learners struggle to read. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Grade 4 learners in this study were in the Foundation Phase, and they did not attend school regularly and the curriculum was narrowed down. This may be a factor that contributed to why some of these learners did not learn to read during their three years in the Foundation Phase.

6.3.4 Sub-question Three

How do teachers assist struggling readers?

The researcher found that the teachers were assisting struggling readers by offering intervention sessions after school, during which teachers read texts aloud with learners and learners completed a comprehension task. These interventions included reading texts from prescribed textbooks or from the Grade 4 English Home Language reading book. For the interventions, the teachers were following the WCED Back on Track Programme, which is a recovery programme that was implemented to reverse COVID-19 learning losses. Part of this Back on Track programme included reading material which teachers could read with their learners during lessons.

The researcher deducted that teachers were taking it upon themselves to assist struggling readers. However, from the data it could not be established whether these interventions have a long-term effect to improve the reading ability of these struggling readers.

6.4 Recommendations

Based on the research, recommendations were developed for how teachers could teach reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. These recommendations could be considered by the WCED on how to support teachers and schools with training them how to teach reading. Previously, the WCED offered a professional development course on how to teach reading in the Intermediate Phase, but this was discontinued. Currently, there is no support provided by the WCED for teachers in the Intermediate Phase on how to teach reading. Second, recommendations could be considered by schools on how to develop and provide professional opportunities for teachers to improve their teaching methods when teaching reading. The recommendations aim to assist in improving the literacy crisis in Grade 4 English Home Language. Last, recommendations will be offered to universities on how they can train pre-service teachers to teach reading.

6.4.1 Recommendations for teachers

It is recommended that teachers should attend professional development courses offered by the Education Department that will aid in improving their teaching methodologies for teaching reading. Intermediate phase teachers should make a conscious decision to seek training to improve their teaching methods for teaching reading. Teachers can seek training through courses offered by the WCED and universities. These courses could be offered online or in person on a part-time basis. To resolve the current literacy crisis in South Africa, all stakeholders in education need to work together to find the most effective teaching methodologies for teaching reading and to upskill teachers.

Teachers need to have knowledge of reading strategies and should be able to apply these strategies in their lessons. Teachers should model or demonstrate to learners how to use these reading strategies in their reading practices. When learners observe how teachers apply reading strategies when reading, this new information will act as a guide for their own reading practices.

6.4.2 Recommendations for schools

It is recommended that schools establish their own professional development workshops for all their language teachers across the curriculum. According to Mizell (2010:5), the learning and achievement of learners' progress when teachers engage in effective professional development focused on the skills teachers need to address learners' major learning challenges, in this case, learning how to read. This will enable teachers to become more effective educators. Schools should not wait upon the Department of Education to offer these courses as their courses may not align with the needs of the school. Furthermore, Mizell (2010:6) states that school-based professional development workshops help teachers to analyse learner achievement data during the school year to identify learning challenges immediately, create solutions, and apply those solutions to address learners' needs. These professional development workshops could be offered on a working day after school, or substitute teachers or teaching assistants could be placed in classrooms while teachers attend these workshops if they need professional development. The workshops should be offered by curriculum advisors, education specialists or academic scholars from universities who are focused on literacy. Currently, to the knowledge of the researcher, there are no professional development opportunities offered by the WCED, schools or universities regarding how to teach reading.

If schools are not willing to offer professional development to their teachers, then they need to ensure that teachers are made aware of professional development offered by any institution offering professional development courses for teachers. This recommendation is made because the participants in this study indicated that they had never attended any workshops offered by the WCED, and they stated that they were not aware of such workshops.

The researcher found that in School B there was no library and that there was a lack of reading resources in the classes observed. Schools need to provide proper resources for teachers and learners to create the opportunities they need to practise reading in their home language. This can be achieved by ensuring that the school has a library filled with educational books that will inspire a love of reading in learners.

It is recommended that the principal or English home language head of department, should conduct regular lesson observations of teachers when teaching reading to determine what

happens in the classroom when teachers are teaching reading. By conducting these lesson observations, the principal and Head of Department can identify where the teachers' strengths lie and how they can improve on their teaching methodology when teaching reading. Thereafter, the teacher and the principal or English Home Language Head of Department should meet with teachers to offer feedback that will assist teachers in improving.

6.4.3 Recommendations for WCED and DBE

The researcher found on the Western Cape Education Department's website that the WCED had, in fact, offered professional development courses to teachers, specifically on how to teach reading in the Intermediate Phase. However, this course dated back to 2020 and it was confirmed by a WCED official that it was not being offered in 2024. Therefore, it is recommended that the WCED should reinstate this short course on how to teach reading in the Intermediate Phase. It should be made mandatory for all Grade 4 English Home Language teachers to attend this course and Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) points should be awarded for attending. The WCED should improve their marketing of these programmes so that it reaches more teachers. Once these training programmes have been attended, the WCED should follow up with teachers to determine whether they are managing to implement the methodologies in which they were trained. Where necessary, further assistance and training should be provided.

It is recommended that the English Home Language curriculum needs to be reviewed and adjusted by including explicit, research-based guidelines on how to teach reading. The curriculum needs to include strategies that could help to meet the needs of struggling readers. This could include providing reading material for learners at all reading levels, which will enable teachers to meet the needs of each learner in their reading lessons. There needs to be more focus on teaching learners to read to understand the text. It was discussed in section 2.5 that teachers need to assess learners' ability to comprehend a text. Furthermore, section 2.5 elaborated on reading with comprehension, stating that when assessing reading comprehension, teachers should utilise multiple methods and that there is not a single technique which can truly measure learners' reading skills (Habib, 2016:36).

6.4.4 Recommendations for universities

It is recommended that universities should include the methodology of teaching reading in their Intermediate Phase teaching programmes for pre-service teachers if this is not already being done. The training should be formal and not only a short course offered to pre-service teachers, but rather a substantial module. Furthermore, universities could also extend their course offering by providing short courses for in-service teachers on how to teach reading or a course

on how to assist struggling readers. These short courses can be offered online and on a part-time basis.

6.5 Limitations

The following limitations were present in this study:

- The study was only conducted at one school in the Metropolitan North District of Cape Town (School A) and one school in the Metropolitan South District in the Western Cape (School B).
- The scope was limited as it only included one quintile 1 school and one quintile 2 school in that specific location.
- The sample size regarding individual participants was small as it only included eight teachers.
- The findings of this study cannot be generalised because of the small scale of the case study. The researcher only interacted with the participants on three occasions. The researcher engaged with the participants for the first time when she had to explain the process to the participants. During the second meeting, the researcher conducted the lesson observations. Finally, during the third meeting, the researcher conducted interviews with the participants. Only eight teachers were interviewed and observed in this study. A bigger study would have to be undertaken before findings can be generalised.

6.6 Contribution of the study

This study will benefit teachers at the two schools chosen for the study and teachers from other schools on how to teach reading. The results can be made available to the Western Cape Education Department to assist with determining what the core challenges are for teachers and what solutions they can offer teachers in the teaching of reading in English Home Language in the Intermediate Phase and to implement continuous professional development for teachers. Last, this study can guide universities to review their curriculum in terms of how they train pre-service teachers regarding how to teach reading.

6.7 Recommendations for further research

The researcher focused on how teachers taught reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. The results indicated that there is a need for professional development for teachers. The results also revealed that universities should train in-service teachers in how to teach reading, not only in the Foundation Phase, but also in the Intermediate Phase. The researcher also found that the Western Cape Education Department had previously conducted training programmes which included how to teach reading in the Intermediate Phase. There should be a greater focus on teacher training in higher education institutions. A study should be

conducted to explore how student teachers are taught how to teach reading when they are at university. Priority should be given to the methods of teaching language concepts such as reading. The findings from this study may not be a representation of all schools, since the context of schools may differ. It is important that research of this kind be conducted on a larger scale.

6.8 Chapter summary

This study aimed to answer the research question: How is reading taught in Grade 4 English Home Language? Through a detailed research process, the researcher concluded that teachers implemented the guidelines on how to teach reading given in the CAPS documents. Teachers should gain additional professional development which focuses on how to teach reading. Teachers experienced various challenges when teaching reading, namely teaching learners whose mother tongue was not English. Last, it was found that the teachers offered reading intervention classes for learners after school. Similarly, the WCED had implemented the Back on Track programme, which was to recover learning loss experienced during COVID-19. This intervention programme included reading material for teachers to use in the classroom.

In addition, teachers' experiences and perspectives were explored regarding how they taught reading. The main findings revealed that the teachers were qualified professionals, although they had not received specific training on how to teach reading. Teachers used the reading strategies and teaching methods recommended by the CAPS document on how to teach reading. Overall, teachers need to seek professional development on how to teach reading to improve their teaching of reading. Keeping the limitations of the study in mind, recommendations were made for future research areas to investigate how teachers teach reading in Grade 4 English Home Language. This study aimed to identify the best possible teaching practices for teaching reading.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics letter

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

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Faculty of Education
Highbury Road
Mowbray
7700
Tel: +27 21 959 6583

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

On the **15 November 2022** the Chairperson of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology granted ethics approval **(EFEC 4-11/2022)** to **A. Buys** for a **MEd degree**.

Title:	**The teaching of reading in Grade 4 English Home Language**

Comments:

The Faculty Research Ethics Committee unconditionally grants ethical clearance for this study. This clearance is valid until **31$_{st}$ December 2025**. Permission is granted to conduct research within the **Faculty of Education only**. Research activities are restricted to those details in the research project as outlined by the Ethics application. Any changes wrought to the described study must be reported to the Ethics Committee immediately.

_____ Date: 23 November 2022 Prof. Zayd Waghid

Chair of the Faculty Research Ethics committee

Faculty of Education

efec@cput.ac.za

Appendix B: WCED permission letter

Directorate: Research

meshack.kanzi@westerncape.gov.za
Tel: +27 021 467 2350
Fax: 086 590 2282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 16375E04C000042-20230314
ENQUIRIES: Mr M Kanzi

Mrs Amber Buys
82 Selbourne Street
Cape Town
7500

Dear Amber Buys,

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE TEACHING OF READING IN GRADE 4 ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation. 2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **28 March 2023 till 30 September 2023.**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalising syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Mr M Kanzi at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted. 9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

> **The Director: Research Services**
> **Western Cape Education Department**
> **Private Bag X9114**
> **CAPE TOWN**
> **8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards,
Meshack Kanzi
Directorate: Research
DATE: 28 March 2023

Appendix C: Observation schedule

Observation schedule

The researcher intends to investigate how teachers teach reading in the Intermediate Phase, specifically in Grade 4 English Home Language. The observations will reflect when and how teachers teach reading.

<u>Classroom Observation Instrument</u>

Date:

Venue: School A

Time:

NO.	QUESTIONS
1.	How does the teacher introduce the lesson?
2.	What technology is used in the lesson?
3.	What learning material (e.g. textbook) is used in the lesson?
4.	What teaching methodologies (strategies and techniques) are used to teach reading?
5.	How does the teacher assess reading?
6.	How does the teacher assist learners who struggle to read?
7.	How are the learners involved in the lesson?
8.	How does the teacher apply the guidelines prescribed in the CAPS for the teaching of reading?
9.	How does the teacher conclude the lesson?

Appendix D: Semi-structured interview questions for teachers

1. How many years have you been teaching English Home Language?
2. How many years have you been teaching Grade 4?
3. What training have you received on how to teach reading as an educator?
4. What training did you receive on how to teach reading in your undergraduate studies?
5. Please describe how you teach reading.
6. How do you assess the learners' reading before you start teaching them how to read?
7. How do you assess reading after you have learners how to read a text/book?
8. What specific strategies or techniques do you teach the learners to use to help them comprehend what they read?
9. Which aspects in teaching reading in English First language do you find challenging?
10. What guidelines in the CAPS document do you find helpful with regard to teaching reading?
11. Do you adhere strictly to the CAPS guidelines? How do you adapt or change it to fit your purpose for the learners' levels of reading?
12. What interventions does WCED and DBE have to address how to teach reading?
13. Have you been trained in any of these intervention programmes introduced by WCED and DBE?
14. If you have been trained in any of these programmes, what is your opinion of these programmes?
15. Do you apply any of these interventions that you have been trained in?
16. In your opinion, what is the most effective way of teaching reading skills to English First Language learners? In your opinion, what specific reading strategies/techniques are important?

Appendix E: Editing certificate

Ricky Woods Academic Editing Services

Editing Certificate

Ricky Woods Academic Editing Services
Cell: +27 (0)83 3126310
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To Whom It May Concern

Cape Peninsula University of Technology
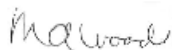
Editing of a Master's Dissertation

I, Marietjie Alfreda Woods, hereby certify that I have completed the editing and correction of the dissertation **The Teaching of Reading in Grade 4 English Home Language** by **Amber Buys.** This dissertation was submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree **Master of Education** at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. I believe that the dissertation meets with the grammatical and linguistic requirements for a document of this nature. The following aspects were covered in the process of the editing:

- A full language edit, including grammar, spelling, concord and clumsy expression;
- Reference formatting was checked, according to Harvard, as stipulated by the university and used by the student;
- Heading styles and captions were standardised;
- Formatting and pagination was checked;
- Table of Contents and Lists of Figures and Tables were checked.

Name of Editor: Marietjie Alfreda (Ricky) Woods

Qualifications: BA (Hons) (Wits); Copy-editing and Proofreading (UCT); Editing Principles and Practice (UP); Accredited Text Editor (English) (PEG)

5 February 2025

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