

2

Motivation to Read and Reading Proficiency

A Crucial Link for Students Learning English as a Second Language

University of Cape Town

**Submitted by: Terry Moffatt
University of Cape Town
2004**

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

Motivation to Read and Reading Proficiency

**A Crucial Link for Students Learning English
as a Second Language**

**A dissertation submitted in fulfillment for the requirements
for the award of Degree of Master of Philosophy**

**Submitted by: Terry Moffatt
MFFTER001**

**Graduate School in Humanities
School of Education – CALLSSA
University of Cape Town
2004**

Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

Terry Moffatt

01.04.04

Date

Words of Gratitude

Thank you very much to Professor Doug Young for his time and valuable feedback throughout the writing of this dissertation. Thanks also to Professor Nigel Bakker for his assistance. Special thanks to my mother for her continual support and belief in me.

Abstract

This dissertation undertakes to investigate the link between the motivation to read and reading proficiency at the Grade Five level.

The majority of the study took place in Bahrain in a bilingual English/Arabic private school. Most of the students were not only reading below grade level, but also disliked reading. Similar levels of reading performance and attitudes towards reading were found at Mountain Road Primary School in Woodstock, South Africa, where the second phase of the study took place. This school was used in the research process to provide a comparison to Bahrain Bayan School as well as an indication of progression.

The impetus for the study came while I was teaching at Bahrain Bayan School in an effort to find a way to motivate students to do the amount of reading necessary to improve reading proficiency. I chose to implement Literature Circles in the classroom, which is a method that integrates the skills-teaching approach with the "whole-language" approach. Students are exposed to a wide variety of reading materials of their choosing and they read extensively. Group discussions are an integral element and help to generate more interest and involvement in the text. At the same time, focus lessons provide students with the skills and strategies necessary to improve literacy.

The two hypotheses that drove the research were:

- Underachievement in reading is largely due to lack of motivation to read;
- Students' background, i.e. early access to books, parental reading habits and so on, is an important factor in reading motivation

The outcomes of the research done at Bahrain Bayan School indicate that there is a link between motivation to reading and reading proficiency. The significance of social-environmental influences was also proven to be an important determinant of reading success.

The comparison with Mountain Road Primary School is useful in that it indicates similar difficulties in a multilingual context. There is good evidence that if a similar program were to be followed as at Bahrain Bayan School, there is a good chance that reading proficiency would improve.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	Page i
Declaration	ii
Words of gratitude	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1. Introductory remarks	1
1.1.a The aim of the study	1
1.1.b The rationale of the study	3
1.2 Description of the study	6
1.2.a The schools	6
1.2.b The students	6
1.2.c My role	7
1.3 Objectives of the study	8
1.4 Research questions	8
1.5 Overview of the dissertation	9

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction	11
2. Literacy	13
2.1 Literacy in social contexts	14
2.2 Categories of literacy	16
2.3 Literacy for second additional language English learners	17

2.4	Importance of a broad definition of literacy	18
3.	Theories of language acquisition and learning	21
3.1	Krashen's Monitor Model	21
3.2	Audiolingualism	27
3.2.1	Criticisms of Audiolingualism	28
3.3	Cognitive Anti-method	28
3.4	Cognitive-code method	29
3.4.1	Criticisms of Cognitive-code method	29
3.5	Second language = First language hypothesis	29
3.6	Interlanguage theory	30
3.7	Interactional Hypothesis	31
3.8	Bialystok Model	33
3.9	Factors of language learning	35
4.	Reading acquisition	38
4.1	Definition of reading	38
4.2	Transactional theory	38
4.2.1	Reading as an interaction	39
4.2.2	Effect of prior learning and background	39
4.2.3	Efferent vs. aesthetic reading	40
4.3	Cueing systems in reading	41
4.4	Two theoretical models for reading acquisition	42
4.4.1	Bottom – up approach	42
4.4.2	Top-down approach	43
4.4.3	Combination of two models	43
4.5	Linguistic and cognitive processes in reading	44
4.6	Components of fluent reading	48
4.6.1	Large sight vocabulary	48
4.6.2	Wide general vocabulary	50
4.6.3	Knowledge of target language and the world	51
4.6.4	Importance of literate environment	52

4.7	Background factors to proficiency	53
5.	Approaches to the instruction of reading	54
5.1	Definition of skills approach	54
5.2	Definition of whole language	57
5.3	Historical roots of the controversy	59
5.4	Advantages and disadvantages of each approach	62
5.4.1	Advantages of skills approach	62
5.4.2	Disadvantages to skills approach	64
5.4.3	Advantages to whole language	65
5.4.4	Disadvantages to whole language	67
5.5	Conclusion	68
6.	Additional components to effective reading instruction	68
6.1	Extensive reading	69
6.1.1	Characteristics of extensive reading	71
6.1.2	Extensive vs. intensive reading	72
6.2	Literature Circles	74
6.2.1	Rationale for Literature Circles	74
6.2.2	Importance of literature discussions	75
6.2.3	Importance of independent reading	78
6.3	Motivation	80
6.3.1	Counter-influences to motivation to read	81
6.3.2	Importance of reading aloud to students	82

CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.	Introduction	85
1.1	Research questions	85
1.2	Research design	86
1.3	Data collection	88

1.3.1	Attitudes and motivation to read	89
1.3.2	Reading ability and use of strategies	89
1.4	Conclusion	89
2.	Method	90
2.1	Setting	90
2.1.1	Bahrain	90
2.1.2	Mountain Road Primary School	94
2.2	Participants	95
2.2.1	Bahrain	95
2.2.2	Mountain Road Primary School	97
2.3	Previous instruction	97
2.3.1	Bahrain	97
2.3.2	Mountain Road Primary School	100
3.	Instructional method	102
3.1	Background	103
3.1.1	Literature circles	105
3.1.2	Classroom structure	109
4.	Data collection	114
4.1	Affective factors	115
4.2	Instruments used to measure affective factors	115
4.2.1	Background questionnaire	116
4.2.2	Motivation to Read Profile	117
4.2.3	Reader Self Perception Scale	119
4.3	Assessment of reading ability	121
4.3.1	Reading ladders	124
4.3.2	Miscue analysis	125
4.3.3	Metacomprehension Strategy Index	126
4.3.4	Developmental continuums	127
5.	Conclusion	128

CHAPTER FOUR – RESULTS OF DATA COLLECTION

1.	Introduction	129
1.1	Introductory remarks	129
1.2	Research questions	129
2.	Background questionnaire	130
2.1	Home language	130
2.2	English fluency	132
2.3	Rating of self as student	132
2.4	Rating of self as reader	133
2.5	Amount of reading done in free time	134
2.6	Free time spent reading by parents	134
2.7	Books owned by students	135
2.8	Books read in past month	135
2.9	Knowledge of favourite book	135
3.	Motivation to Read Profile	136
4.	Reader Self Perception Scale	137
5.	Metacomprehension Strategy Index	138
6.	Assessment of reading ability	139
6.1	Reading accuracy and fluency	139
6.2	Comprehension	139
6.3	Reading frustration level	140
6.4	Grade level equivalent	140
7.	Conclusion	141

CHAPTER FIVE – INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA COLLECTION

1.	Introduction	143
2.	Background questionnaire	144
2.1	Home language	144
2.2	Self-perception of English fluency	146
2.3	Self-perception of overall academic and reading ability	147
2.4	Free time spent reading	151
2.5	Number of books owned by student	155
2.6	Number of books read in last month	155
2.7	Knowledge of favourite book	156
3.	Motivation to Read Profile	157
4.	Reader Self Perception Scale	158
5.	Metacomprehension Strategy Index	159
6.	Reading ability and progress	161
6.1	Accuracy rate	161
6.2	Reading frustration levels	162
6.3	Grade level equivalent	163
7.	Limitations of study	164
7.1	Lie factor	164
7.2	Time	165
7.3	Before and after assessments	165
8.	Conclusion	168

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION

1.	Concluding remarks	168
2.	Values of study	168
2.1	Bridging the gap	169

2.2	(2002) South African Revised National Curriculum Standards	169
3.	Obstacles	172
3.1	Resources	172
3.2	Teacher education	173
3.3	Number of students and time constraints	175
4.	Concluding remarks	175

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SOURCES USED	177
-------------------------------------	------------

APPENDICES

Appendix A	183
Appendix B	185
Appendix C	188
Appendix D	189

Introduction

1. Introductory remarks

In this chapter, I will lay the foundation for Chapters 2 – 5 by briefly outlining both the aim and the rationale for the study. I will also provide a synopsis of the study itself.

1.1.a. The aim of the study

The aim of the study is to test the effectiveness of a comprehensive approach to reading on raising the level of reading proficiency as well as increasing student motivation to read. This comprehensive approach emphasises the utilisation of Literature Circles. The target group for this study is students learning English as a second language, but applies to all students.

I came to undertake this study while teaching at a school in Bahrain. The languages of learning and teaching were English and Arabic.

Approximately 90% of the students spoke Arabic as a first language. As a Grade Five English teacher, I found that most students came to me claiming to 'hate reading'. I had two explanations for this:

- a) The English reading programme in Grades 1 – 5 was a basal programme from the US. There was little or no personal relevance in the stories and the approach consisted of mainly 'skill and drill' using a lot of workbooks.
- b) Many students were reading at approximately 2 – 3 years below grade level. The readings and skills they were being asked to do were beyond their reading frustration level, therefore not enjoyable.

The task for me as a teacher was to find a way to increase motivation so students would do the amount of reading necessary to improve reading proficiency. There was also the continued need to teach reading strategies such as word skills, vocabulary and comprehension. I found that students tended to 'tune out' during this type of instruction because they were not actually interested in improving their reading skills because of the disinterest in reading itself.

After trying various approaches, I came upon a method called Literature Circles. This method employs extensive reading, discussion and the use of projects to help students interact with the literature they read. The discussions, freedom of choice with regard to reading material, extensive reading at the students' comfort reading level all work to increase

motivation of students not just to read, but also to read for pleasure.

Incorporated into this structure are 'focus' lessons, which emphasise specific reading strategies and skills. These lessons are related to the books being read and the themes, so the lessons are relevant. The skills were not included because it was what we were supposed to cover that week; they were chosen specifically with student needs in mind.

1.1.b. The rationale for the study

Motivation is one of the main obstacles in teaching children to read. If the desire to read is absent, students are unlikely to undertake the amount of reading necessary in order to develop proficiency. There are many factors affecting motivation, including:

- Access to appropriate resources;
- Amount of ownership in the reading and learning process;
- Assumed relevance of the reading material;
- Influences outside of school, namely reading in the home;
- Perceived competence in reading abilities.

All of these factors will be taken into account and discussed in the course of this study.

Because of the importance of motivation on the development of reading proficiency, it was the intent of this study to create a classroom

environment in which student motivation to read is increased. This was done through the utilisation of Literature Circles, which is a methodology promoting the reading, discussion and interaction with literature.

Literature Circles are a student-centred approach that is based on the transactional theory of reading. Students actively construct understandings by bringing meaning to, as well as taking meaning from, a text. (Rosenblatt 1979) Students read extensively from a wide range of genres, which increases proficiency while creating a positive attitude toward reading.

Creating classroom environments that increase motivation to read is crucial. This is why I incorporated Literature Circles into the classroom in Bahrain and why I chose to study the effects of using this type of reading instruction. In moving into the South African school environment, I found the same lack of motivation and poor reading proficiency to be true. In a study conducted by the Western Cape Education Department, it was found that only 32% of Grade Three students are reading at the Grade Three level. (2003) I chose to focus on Mountain Road Primary School in Woodstock, Cape Town. After assessing the students and making observations of classroom techniques, it was clear that the students were not doing the amount of reading necessary to improve their reading skills, nor were they motivated to do so. This was compounded by a lack of

resources that was not a problem in Bahrain. Most of the reading materials being used in Mountain Road Primary School classrooms were dated pre-1970. Also attributing to the lack of reading proficiency was the fact that the majority of students did not come from a culture of reading. These findings will be discussed in greater depth in Chapters Four and Five.

Because of the success in increasing student motivation to read and improving reading proficiency by the use of Literature Circles in Bahrain (as will be shown in Chapters Four and Five), I sought to introduce similar strategies at Mountain Road Primary School. In order to do that, I conducted research to find the similarities and differences between Mountain Road Primary School (MRPS) and Bahrain Bayan School (BBS). The findings and comparisons of this research are included in Chapters Four and Five.

The circumstances of my role were different at MRPS as I was not the classroom teacher for Grade Five. Thus, I was not able to implement the same strategies as in Bahrain. However, the findings from the data indicate that the students at MRPS would benefit from Literature Circles as a way of increasing motivation to read and teachers would benefit from learning strategies to help increase that motivation.

1.2 Description of the study

This became a two-part study. The majority of the research took place in Bahrain from September 2000 – June 2001. The second part of the study was conducted in Cape Town, South Africa from March 2003 – June 2003.

1.2.a. The schools

In Bahrain, the study was conducted at Bahrain Bayan School, which is a private school with both English and Arabic as the languages of learning and teaching. The school encompasses Grades R – 12. The majority of students come from wealthy prominent families, including the royal family.

In South Africa, research was done at Mountain Road Primary School in Woodstock, Cape Town. This school uses English as the language of learning and teaching and includes Grades R – 7. Most of the students are from working class “coloured” families.

1.2.b. The students

75 students at the Grade Five level were participants in the study in Bahrain. Only 18% of the students had English as a home language; the remainder had Arabic or Persian as a first language.

At Mountain Road Primary School, I used 60 Grade Five students for data collection. 56% of the students reported English as a home language, with the remainder reporting home languages of Xhosa and Afrikaans.

1.2.c. My role

At Bahrain Bayan School (BBS), I was the classroom teacher for all 75 students (3 classes of 25 in each). I was also the Head of the English Department, which was important because this made it easier to implement the necessary changes to the curriculum. Also, being the classroom teacher, I was able to set up and run Literature Circles, as well as chart and observe student progress. More importantly, I was able to monitor changes in attitudes toward reading throughout the school year.

The research conducted at Mountain Road Primary School (MRPS) had a different purpose than that at BBS. I was not the Grade Five classroom teacher and I did not have the entire school year in which to gather data. Therefore, I used this research from MRPS as a comparison to the beginning and ending reading levels of the students in Bahrain. As an

'outsider', it was also easier to be objective in observing and assessing student motivation to read and the factors affecting this motivation.

1.3. Objectives of the study

The primary motivation for undertaking this study was to look for more accessible strategies to improve not only the reading level of students with English as a second language, but the attitudes toward reading as well.

As I will show in Chapter Two, there is a great deal of research that has been done to try to find the 'right' approach to teach reading. However, if students do not *want* to read, the approach is insignificant. Therefore, it is my objective in this study to find effective strategies to first increase motivation to read, which will then lead to improved reading proficiency.

Based on the results of the study done by the Western Cape Department of Education mentioned earlier, it is important for schools in South Africa to look at the motivation of students to read, especially students who do not come from a culture of reading and who are learning English as a second language. It is for this reason that I undertook the comparison analysis at Mountain Road Primary School.

1.4. Research questions

Following from my description of the study and its objectives, my central research questions are:

- Is motivation a significant factor in determining reading proficiency and overall levels of literacy in students learning English as a second additional language?
- Does enhanced motivation as set up by the use of Literature Circles and their associated operations and practices, improve reading proficiency and overall levels of literacy?

1.5 Overview of dissertation

- Chapter Two – Literature Review

This chapter analyses critical approaches to literacy. I will also discuss specific approaches to the teaching of reading, Literature Circles, motivation to read and the factors affecting this motivation.

- Chapter Three – Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the settings for the study, students used, methodology, as well as methods of data collection.

- Chapter Four – Results of Data Collection

The data will be presented generally in the form of tables. I will describe the tools used for data collection, which include

questionnaires, interviews, running records, developmental continuums and various forms of authentic assessment.

- Chapter Five – Interpretation and Discussion of Data Collection

As well as analysis and interpretation of the data, this chapter concludes with a discussion of limitations to the study.

- Chapter Six – Conclusion

This final chapter explores the implications of my research and makes practical recommendations for implementation.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

1. Introduction

This literature review considers recent research on literacy, language acquisition and learning, reading acquisition and approaches to reading instruction. From this research, I will then consider which findings point to a useful model of a reading programme for students learning English as a second language.

There are five major categories of research to be reviewed:

- a) Literacy – Part One will look at recent research on literacy, including the definition of literacy, second language literacy and literacy in various contexts.
- b) Language Acquisition and Learning – In Part Two, I will discuss various theories of language acquisition as well as criticisms of these theories. The debate between language acquisition and language learning will also be addressed.
- c) Reading Acquisition – In this section, I will move from language acquisition to more specific theories and research on reading acquisition.

These first three sections will help to provide a theoretical framework for the development of a successful model for a reading program for second language English students. The final two sections deal more specifically with reading instruction programmes and what research has shown with regard to effective instruction of reading.

- d) Reading Instruction – In Part Four, I will look at two approaches to reading instruction – skills or word-centred approach and ‘whole language’ or meaning-centred approach. There is tremendous controversy as to which is the correct approach to the instruction of reading. I will first define each approach and then examine the historical roots of the controversy between the two. I will look at the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. Lastly, I will discuss how these two approaches can be integrated.
- e) Effective Instruction strategies – Finally, I will review research pertaining to effective instruction in teaching reading to second language English learners. Based on the principles of effective instruction and learning taken from the research, I will highlight elements that help to develop an environment best suited for success of second language English readers. I will review

influences and counter-influences on motivation to read, classroom structure and the role of the teacher in this structure.

Two essential components I will be reviewing as part of this section are extensive reading and Literature Circles. Literature Circles do not make up the entire language curriculum, but are one part that exists within a broader curricular framework. This framework theoretically consists of the interactive model combining word-centred and meaning-centred approaches to reading that will be constructed by reviewing the research on language and reading acquisition.

The students to whom this model would apply are at least functionally literate in their first language. That is, they are able to read and write on at least the third or fourth grade level in their native language. They are also aware of the relationship between oral language and written text and have some oral communication in the second language (English).

2. Literacy

There are many definitions of literacy and what actually constitutes literacy, especially for learners of English as an additional language. Most

definitions go beyond “the ability to read and write” and include, at the core of the definition, the ability to construct meaning. “Any definition of literacy must include reference to the ability to function autonomously in a literate environment. Literacy is more than simply being able to read the words around us, but it includes knowing when it is appropriate to act upon these words and then being able to decide how to act.” (Wray 1994) The National Literacy Act of 1991 in the US defines literacy as “an individual’s ability to read, write and speak in English and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”

2.1 Literacy in social contexts

Literacy is not a single ability or skill. It describes a whole collection of behaviours, skills, knowledge, processes and attitudes. It has something to do with our abilities to use language in our daily life and in the way we deal with the world around us. The concept of what is meant by school literacy must include the language practices of children and their communities in relation to everyday literacy. This is necessary so that the differing literary practices can include various cultural and social processes rather than make assumptions of cultural deficiency. This is essential for learners of English as a second additional language. “Literacy is viewed

as having the potential not only for changing the individual learners, but also for changing the world. This goes beyond literacy as a set of skills – literacy as performance – to literacy as having the potential to open new ways of viewing the world and transforming it.” (Wells 1990) As literacy shapes how people think, it also shapes the minds of those who participate in a literate society. Literacy is often a key factor not only in the degree of self-determination people have but also in the amount of influence and power they can use to shape the character and direction of their communities. (Apple 1982; Freire and Macedo 1987; Graff 1987)

Literacy is a complex social phenomenon. The uses and consequences of literacy vary greatly from culture to culture. Any attempts to define literacy must take into account the contexts in which reading and writing occur. The more research that is done on the history of literacy, the more obvious it becomes that what the term actually means will vary according to culture and the values of a given culture. A body of research (Heath 1983; Barton & Hamilton 1998; Prinsloo & Breier 1986; Street 1984) has documented the ways in which the language practices of different communities involve different ways of using texts to construct knowledge and different ways of ‘being a reader’. These studies illustrate the relationships between literacy and the social practices of various cultures as well as how assumptions about education differ and therefore affect

views on the purpose of literacy. The view that literacy is simply a skill is rejected. Rather, it is seen as being closely tied to cultural and social processes within various cultures.

2.2 Categories of literacy

There are three broad categories of literacy that are generally associated with social contexts:

- a) Functional literacy – this is often related to basic writing (coding) and reading (decoding) skills that allow people to produce and understand simple texts. The point of functional literacy is generally considered to be at the 4th grade level. (Carbo 1987; Chall, Heron and Hilferty 1987; Kozol 1985) The reasoning behind this point is that it “reflects students’ ability to perform the simple decoding acts that serve as a threshold to a range of texts and to the development of higher level skills.” (Williams 1990)
- b) Cultural literacy – emphasises the need for shared experiences and background knowledge to fully understand texts. What a text means depends upon the background, training, values, experiences, etc. of the reader. “Literacy must be based on a foundation of shared knowledge and traditions.” (Hirsch 1987) Literate behaviour is linked to making texts personally

meaningful. "Literacy does not lead...[students] to make the essential leap from literacy to being literate – from knowing what the words say to understanding what they mean. Readers make meaning by linking the symbols on the page to real-world knowledge and then considering what the text means for generating new ideas and actions not explicitly written or 'said' in the text." (Heath 1986)

- c) Critical literacy - related to identifying the political aspect of reading and writing. This type of literacy stresses an understanding of the intended audience as well as the proposed purpose of the text.

2.3 → Literacy for second language English learners

Literacy for the learner of English as a second language is the ability to make meaning from the second language as well as the ability to use literacy to solve problems and successfully deal with both the academic world and the world outside of school. We learn language not simply for the sake of learning language; we learn it to make sense of the world around us and to communicate our understandings with others. Language cannot be separated from the social contexts in which it occurs.

A great deal of recent research on second language and literacy concerns the fact that literacy is a social action and meaningful practice is necessary for literacy to develop. In *Literacy and Development*, Brian Street offers the following ideological model of literacy; "Literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill..." Street goes on to say that "engaging with literacy is always a social act even from the outset. The ways in which teachers or facilitators and their students interact is already a social practice that affects the nature of literacy being learned and the ideas about literacy held by the participants, especially new learners...It is not valid to suggest that 'literacy' can be 'given' neutrally and then its 'social' effects only experienced afterward." (2001, p.8)

This model gives support to the view that literacy learning in the classroom should be social. Students need opportunities to practice the social attributes of literacy in order to progress to higher levels of literacy.

2.4 Importance of a broad definition of literacy

It is important to avoid using a limited definition of literacy, especially when considering the wide range of cultures and backgrounds often brought together in one classroom. Recent critical perspectives have taken a look at the varying aspects of literacy across different social,

institutional and cultural contexts, pointing out the changing 'social language' that shapes specific literacies. These perspectives include those of the New Literacy Studies (Street 1983; Gee 1990; Prinsloo and Breier 1996; Barton & Hamilton 1988), the multiple literacies approach by the New London Group (1996) and the 'genre studies' approach (Halliday 1996; Cope & Kalantzis 1993). They have argued that a single model of literacy in schools has marginalised 'non-mainstream' children. The cultural and linguistic resources they bring to school are not recognised as being beneficial to their learning and therefore are seen as unnecessary.

✎ This would not be the case if a broader view of literacy were in place.

Schools have often failed these students by not teaching them to deal with the varieties of literacy practices that are encountered both inside and outside of school. We cannot assume that all students bring a common core of literacy to school, or that those who do not bring what is customarily expected are deficient. Rather, the first step is to respect each student's home language, prior knowledge and cultural experiences and determine what he/she already knows and can do upon entering school. Then, appropriate instructional support should be provided on that basis.

A teacher's view of literacy can have significant influence not only on teaching methods, but also on expected outcomes. The ways in which we teach literacy skills – the texts we use and the models for interacting with

those texts that we set up and encourage - can be reshaped to include and capitalise on the kinds of differences that students bring to the classroom. There is convincing evidence that this reshaping of how we teach is more likely to generate success for these students than the often unfair demands made by more traditional approaches. (Luke & Kale 1997).

↗ Literacy occupies a significant amount of time academically and is at the heart of the curriculum. Without literacy competence, students will find it difficult to learn effectively. Once learned, the skills of literacy should be long lasting. This means that learners should find the end result of being able to read and write and all other aspects of literacy so worthwhile that they will continue to use what they have learned outside of school and for the rest of their lives. ↘ This also means that having learned to read and understand the second language, learners will continue to turn to books for information, for pleasure and for learning long after formal instruction has been completed. It is true that we cannot be certain in the present moment that we are helping to shape well-motivated adults who will be committed to continuing self-education. However, we can create the conditions that are likely to lead to lifelong learning. This objective must be central if language learning, and schooling in general, is to be meaningful and not merely a forced march through academic exercises.

3. Theories of Language Acquisition and Learning

The acquisition of language, both first and second, is an area of debate. This debate centres on the question of whether language, especially the second additional language, is acquired naturally through exposure or whether it must be learned. Those who believe that language is acquired naturally hold that the ability to acquire language, either first or second, is a natural ability that takes place over time. It is the process whereby language is acquired as a result of natural and random experience to the language without any specific instruction. With the learned approach, exposure to the language is structured through instruction rather than left to chance.

In this section, I will discuss various theories, both from the learned and acquisition viewpoint. I will also consider the criticisms of these theories.

3.1 Krashen's Monitor Model

One of the most well known theories of the second additional language learning process is Krashen's Monitor Model. This theory has become popular with teachers of second language, especially in the United States. However, the theory has been seriously criticised on many grounds by second language researchers and theorists. (Gregg 1984; Long 1985;

McLaughlin 1978; Taylor 1984) The chief criticism is that it is not clear how Krashen can claim that 'learnt' knowledge does not contribute to the development of 'acquired' knowledge. This cannot be tested empirically. Also, it is unclear as to how the input hypothesis can be tested. Another criticism is that the Monitor Model is far too restricting and that learners are capable of learning and using knowledge of language to a far greater extent than Krashen allows for.

Keeping these criticisms in mind, the theory is important in looking at language acquisition and the question of learnt vs. acquired knowledge. On these grounds, I will look at the five central hypotheses of the Monitor Model as well as the criticisms of each.

- a) Acquisition – Learning Hypothesis: According to Krashen, the definition of acquisition is the subconscious process by which linguistic competence is developed as a result of using language for real communication and learning is the conscious process by which metalingual knowledge of a language is developed through study. 'Acquired' and 'learnt' knowledge are stored separately, learnt knowledge cannot be converted into acquired knowledge." (1994) For Krashen, it is not the setting but conscious attention to rules that distinguishes language

acquisition from language learning. He goes on to say that what is consciously learned – through the presentation of rules and explanations of grammar – does not become the basis of acquisition of the target language.

- i. According to McLaughlin (1987), all of these arguments may be true, but they do not provide evidence to support the claim that learning does not become acquisition.

"Such a claim runs counter to the intuitive belief of many second language learners, for whom it seems obvious that at least some of the rules can be acquired through learning." (Gregg 1984)

- b) Monitor Hypothesis: This states that 'learning has only one function and that is as a monitor or editor.' Krashen's claim is that formal instruction of a language provides rule isolation and feedback for the development of the Monitor, but production of the language is based on what is acquired through communication with the Monitor helping to improve accuracy of the target language. Conscious knowledge of rules does not help in acquiring language but only enables the learner to 'polish up' what has been acquired through

communication. So the focus of language instruction should be on communication rather than the learning of rules.

i. The Monitor hypothesis has been highly criticised because: a) it has been proven to be difficult to show any evidence of Monitor use; b) strict conditions are required which makes it non-representative; c) the hypothesis is untestable in any real sense. "The Monitor is very limited and requires such carefully confined conditions for operation that it cannot be thought to be representative of learners' conscious knowledge of grammar." (Seliger 1979)

c) Natural order hypothesis: Krashen states that "we acquire the rules of language in a predictable order, some rules tending to come early and others late. There is evidence that it is independent of the order in which rules are taught in language classes." (1985)

i. Most of the arguments for the natural order hypothesis are based on morpheme studies, but these tell little about acquisition sequences. They

are too specific and limited. Research that has looked at the development sequences for specific grammatical forms indicates that there is individual variation and may be several different developmental streams leading to competence in the target language. (McLaughlin 1978; Gregg 1984) This hypothesis is criticised mainly for the failure to take into account individual differences in learners.

d) Input hypothesis: "Humans acquire language in only one way – by understanding messages or by receiving 'comprehensible input'...We move from i , our current level, to $i + 1$, the next level along the natural order, by understanding input containing $i + 1$." (Krashen 1985) For Krashen, comprehensible input is the route to acquisition and information about grammar in the target language is automatically available when the input is understood.

i. There is no evidence to support the input hypothesis. Even if it could be shown that

comprehensible input assists children to learn a second language, there is considerable evidence from research on second language learning in bilingual classrooms that children need to interact actively with the language if they are to become proficient. (McLaughlin 1985) Understanding the input is not enough for effective language learning.

- e) Affective Filter hypothesis: The affective filter was first proposed by Dulay and Burt to account for how affective variables affect the process of second language learning. The filter is "that part of the internal processing system that subconsciously screens incoming language based on 'affect': the learner's motives, needs, attitudes and emotional states." (Dulay and Burt 1982) The filter is thought to limit what it is that the learner attends to, what will be learned and how quickly language will be acquired.
 - i. There is no basis for relating the affective filter to individual differences in language learning.

Many researchers agree with Krashen on the basic assumptions of his hypotheses – the need to move from grammar-based to communicatively oriented language instruction, the role of the affective filter in language learning and the importance of acquisitional sequences in second language development. However, because of the inability for most of the hypotheses and claims to be tested, the theory itself is unsound.

There are numerous other theories of language acquisition and learning that are important to mention in order to provide a broader view.

Following is a brief discussion of several theories and the as well as some relevant criticisms.

3.2 Audiolingualism

This theory grew out of the structural approach that used techniques of mimicry and memorisation. For learning to be effective, habits had to become automatic. "Language learning is over-learning. Anything else is of no use." (Bloomfield 1942) Only if the patterns of the second language had been overlearnt was it possible for the learner to produce them correctly in real communication.

3.2.1 Criticisms of audiolinguilism

There are many objections to the audiolinguistic learning theory: a) Language learning cannot be treated as a process of habit formation; b) Errors are part of the learning process and often provide evidence that acquisition is taking place; c) Explanations are sometimes necessary. Audiolingualism lost popularity because classroom results were disappointing. Highly skilled teachers were needed and learners found the practice boring. Also, this type of memorisation does not lead to fluency in real life situations.

3.3 Cognitive anti-method

Central to this theory is the assumption that the learner rather than the teacher control second language learning. This includes error correction. It is important for second language learners to discover their own errors rather than be corrected by a teacher. (Corder 1967) It is also assumed that it is not necessary to attend to linguistic form in order to acquire second language. "Systematic attention to grammatical form is neither a necessary condition nor a sufficient one for successful language learning." (Newmark 1963) The isolation of parts from wholes in language learning is artificial and students should be exposed to the language in natural contexts.

3.4 Cognitive-Code Method

This method is half way between the audiolinguistic method and the cognitive anti method. Competence in language is equated with knowledge of grammar rules, while performance (i.e. speech) is equated with practice. Chastain (1971) argued that the presentation of grammatical rules should precede giving students the opportunities for practice. It is recognised that learners needed opportunities to use language innovatively and creatively, so the learning of language is more than the memorisation of a fixed set of patterns. The starting point for learning a language is 'concept attainment', which results from verbalising grammar rules and then is followed by practice once the rules are attained. (Chastain 1971; Jakobovitz 1968)

3.4.1 Criticisms of cognitive-code method

A problem with this method is that understanding the grammatical rules of a language does not equal competence in that language.

3.5 Second language = First Language Hypothesis

This hypothesis became commonly used to distinguish between acquisition and learning. (Corder 1973; Wilkins 1974) The terms were defined with specific reference to the conditions of learning. The term *acquisition* is used here to refer to the process where language is acquired as a result of natural and largely random experiences to the language.

Learning refers to when the experience with language is structured through language teaching. The basis of this definition contrasts with Krashen. He emphasised the differences in the way linguistic knowledge is internalised and stored (process differences). The basic premise of this hypothesis is that students learn a second language in much the same way as they do a first language and the skills of the first language can be transferred to the learning of the second.

3.6 Interlanguage theory

Interlanguage can be seen as a restructuring continuum whereby the starting point of second language acquisition is the first language and the learner gradually substitutes the target language for the first language. It can also be seen as a recreating continuum where the learner starts from some basic simple grammar, which is independent of the first language. There are seven major premises of the interlanguage theory, which is proposed by Ellis (1979):

- a) The learner constructs a system of abstract language rules from which comes comprehension and production;
- b) The grammar the learner builds is incomplete and unstable;
- c) Learners pass through a number of stages in the process of acquiring the target language;

- d) Learners' competence is variable and different according to individual circumstances;
- e) Interlanguage development reflects the operation of cognitive language strategies. There may be first language transfer, overgeneralisation and simplification (Cancino 1974);
- f) Interlanguage can also reflect the operation of communicative strategies. A variety of these strategies enable the learner to compensate for a lack of knowledge. Typical strategies are to paraphrase, code switching and appeals for assistance.
- g) Interlanguage systems may 'fossilise'. The term fossilisation (Selinker 1978) refers to the tendency of many learners to reach a plateau beyond which they don't progress. This may be because there is no communicative need for further development or it may be that full competence in a second language is neurolinguistically impossible for most learners. (Selinker and Lamendella 1978)

3.7 Interactional Hypothesis

A combination of the learned approach and acquired approach is necessary for reaching higher levels of language acquisition. According to

Cummins (1998), learners develop two types of proficiency: conversational (mainly through natural acquisition) and academic (mainly through learned acquisition). He states that second language acquisition will remain abstract for students unless they have repeated opportunities to use English in a variety of situations. Students cannot learn a language without using it. Conditions of learning must be provided which allow opportunities for students to practice their knowledge in authentic communicative situations. (Johnson 1988)

One hypothesis about the relationship between interaction and learning is the interactional hypothesis. This hypothesis states that second language acquisition occurs most efficiently when learners have plenty of opportunities to negotiate meaning whenever there is some sort of communication difficulty. However, this hypothesis is difficult to test because the relationship between meaning-negotiation and acquisition is unclear. Long (1985) argues that it is not necessary to demonstrate a direct relationship between interaction and acquisition. He suggests a link can be demonstrated indirectly by showing that the negotiation of meaning promotes comprehension, which in turn promotes acquisition.

Language develops as we have increased opportunities to use it in authentic contexts for real purposes. Teachers should keep language in meaningful contexts rather than trying to teach isolated language parts

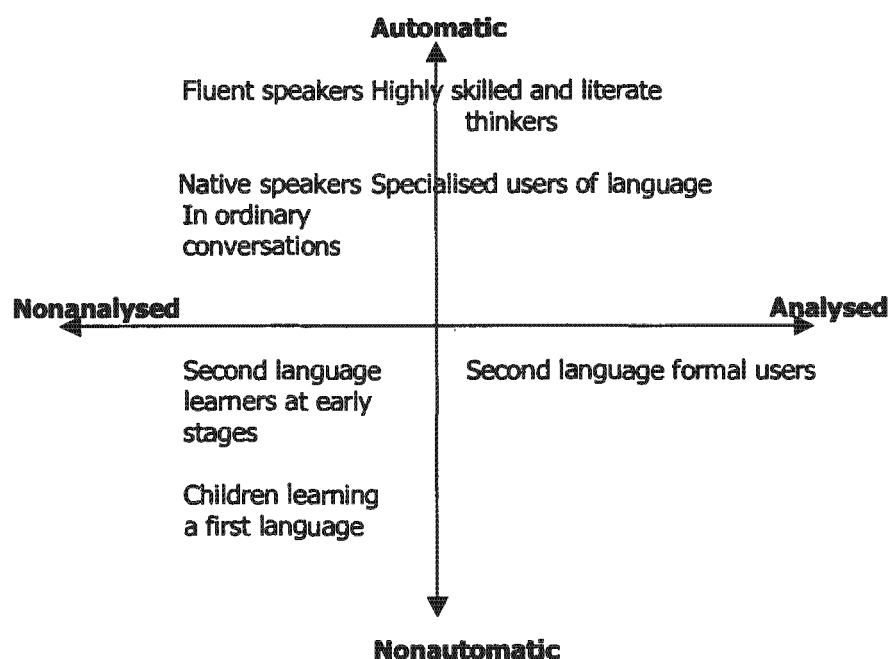
out of context. Learners should be working with and using the language as a whole. The level of language acquisition necessary to succeed in school takes a long time to develop. Language becomes more abstract at higher academic levels. "Although second language English learners can develop oral proficiency in about two years, it takes at least five years to develop academic proficiency as measured on standardised tests."

(Collier 1989) According to the cognitive learning theory, learning takes place when the learner is able to carry out operations automatically as a result of practice.

3.8

Bialystok Model

The various levels of language use and knowledge are illustrated in the following model (Bialystok 1985):



The analysed vs. non-analysed factor refers to awareness of the structure of language. Fluent speakers in ordinary everyday conversations are not generally thinking of or concerned with the structure of the language being used.

The automatic vs. non-automatic factor has to do with the amount of access that the learner has to knowledge. Knowledge becomes more automatic as learning takes place as well as through practice. This automaticity is then reflected in easier access to the language and more fluency. Barnes (1971) emphasises the need for real, personal communication in language learning. "To put it bluntly, too many children spend too much time vaguely listening and then regurgitating; throughout the curriculum, they should be required to use language for stories and ideas, for exploring things and people, and for organising thought and feeling explicitly."

McLaughlin (1987) claims that considerable training is necessary before automatic processing can take place. Errors occur because the learner has not yet automatised performance. Practice strengthens connections and reduces errors. It is a widely held view that learners gain control over their second language knowledge through practice. "...it is quite clear and uncontroversial to say that most spontaneous performance is attained

through practice. In the course of actually performing in the target language, the learner gains the necessary control so that he or she can use the language quickly without reflection.” (Sharwood-Smith 1981)

The cognitive theory also emphasises the importance of ensuring that adequate opportunities are provided in the classroom to prepare students for participation in ordinary face-to-face interactions. This requires providing conditions for full automatisisation of second language knowledge. According to cognitive theory, formal instruction can help to increase a learner’s analysed knowledge.

3.9 Factors of Language Learning

Regardless of the approach to language acquisition, the following factors are involved in language learning:

- a) Present knowledge - skills and concepts acquired in the first language transfer or are accessible through the second language. (Cummins 1981, 1984) The greater the abilities in the first language, the more rapid and complete the acquisition of the second language. Research has shown that children learning English as a second language who develop their first language skills fully during the preschool years often make the transition to English more easily and more effectively than children who don’t

maintain their home language during preschool years. (Dolson 1985) Life experiences and background knowledge also support the development of the second language by giving the learner more information to draw upon.

- b) Ability - the inherent characteristics of the learner involved in receiving, processing, storing, retrieving and expressing language. This refers to the intellectual and academic abilities of each student.
- c) Motivation - the attitudes of the learner toward the second language. These attitudes are affected by the role the second language plays in the life of the learner.
- d) Opportunity – family and socio-economic situation as well as the conditions of schooling. The amount of exposure to the language in and outside of school and the roles this language serves in the family and community are also factors.

The curriculum for language learning must extend well beyond a sequence of predetermined activities. It cannot be assumed that all learners move at the same pace. "Learning to speak, read and write is a constructive

process under the control of the learner.” (Holdaway 1976) Long standing research in children’s oral language development (Menyuk 1971) and more recent research in children’s pre-school growth in literacy is clear about the fact that children are born into a complex environment and select from it whatever they are ready for. (Wells 1986) If that environment is made stimulating and learning is made authentic and meaningful, it is not necessary to provide a tightly controlled program of learning activities. Often, learning is negatively affected when inappropriate sequences are set up and it is insisted that children follow them. Among other consequences, this type of program can significantly lower motivation. “We know very little about the actual processes by which children learn language, but there has been an increasing awareness over the past few years of just how much the child brings to the task by way of his own internal organisation and innate human characteristics. He certainly is not ‘taught’ language in any formal sense, but acquires it naturally, so to speak, in the course of maturing and developing in an environment where he is adequately exposed to it...this natural process of acquisition continues actively into the early school years and perhaps beyond...” (C. Chomsky 1972)

4. Reading Acquisition

4.1 Definition of 'reading'

In moving from language acquisition to the more specific area of reading acquisition, it is necessary to first establish what constitutes "reading".

According to *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom*, reading is "the construction of meaning from a printed or written message. The construction of meaning involves the reader connecting information from the written message with previous knowledge to arrive at a meaning – at an understanding." (Bamford and Day 1988 p. 12)

4.2 Transactional Theory

If we are to accept the definition of reading as the construction of meaning from text, it is important to understand the transactional theory of reading proposed by Louise Rosenblatt (1978). "The transactional phrasing of the reading process underlies the essential importance of both elements, reader and text, in any reading event. A person becomes a reader by virtue of his activity in relation to a text, which he organises in a set of verbal symbols. A physical text, a set of marks on a page, becomes the text...by virtue of its relationship with a reader who can interpret it and reach through it to the world of the work." (Rosenblatt 1978)

4.2.1 Reading as an interaction

"The transactional nature of language and concepts of transaction illuminate what happens in reading. Every reading activity is an event, a transaction involving a particular reader and a particular configuration of marks on a page and occurring at a particular time in a particular context. The 'meaning' does not reside ready-made in the text or in the reader, but happens during the transaction between text and reader." (Rosenblatt 1988)

Reading is not a passive activity. It requires the reader to be active and thinking. Successful readers interact actively with the text – adding, deleting, and substituting words when appropriate. This reconstruction is an interactive process between the reader and the text because the reader contributes background knowledge and an understanding of the language itself. Readers pay attention not only to words, but also to images, feeling, attitudes, associations and ideas that the words evoke. The concept of transaction emphasises the relationship with, and continuing awareness of, the text.

4.2.2 Effect of prior knowledge and background

If we think of the total literary transaction, we must recognise that the reader brings to or adds to the interaction his whole past experience of life and literature. His memories, present preoccupations, sense of values, aspirations, enter into the relationship with the text. "The selection and organisation of responses to some degree hinge on the assumption, the expectations that he brings out of the stream of his own life. Thus built into the raw material of the literary process itself is the particular world of the reader." (Rosenblatt 1978)

4.2.3 Efferent vs. aesthetic reading

In efferent reading, the reader is concerned with what knowledge will be taken away after reading has taken place (i.e. instruction manual or cookbook). In aesthetic reading, the reader is concerned with what happens during the actual reading event. The reader's attention is centred directly in what he or she is feeling during the relationship with that particular text.

In most schools, the emphasis in teaching reading is almost entirely concerned with efferent reading. The question then arises: to what extent do environmental pressures – home, school, societal – lead children to focus attention on efferent reading and what effect does this pressure have on the motivation to read? It seems that when we are

teaching children to read, we focus on books with meaningful stories and colourful pictures which are enjoyable. We use these as a “hook” to get students to read – we use aesthetic reading to get children interested in books and reading. It does not seem logical that we would then move to predominantly efferent reading when we want to sustain interest and motivation to read.

4.3 Cueing systems in reading

According to K. Goodman (1967), during this interactive process, a fluent reader predicts what he/she is about to read and then confirms or rejects this prediction on the basis of three cueing systems: semantic, syntactic and graphophonic. The following is an explanation of each:

- a) Semantic – having the appropriate world and cultural knowledge needed to understand the text. This knowledge is important in helping to reconstruct meaning from the text. The semantic system is important when readers are processing new information, as it is necessary to make links with previous knowledge. Within the text, much of the semantic information is carried in content words, such as nouns, adjectives and verbs.
- b) Syntactic – describes the language system itself. A competent reader predicts on the basis of what ‘sounds right’. Within the text,

syntactic information is conveyed in the grammatical structure of language, which includes word order.

- c) Graphophonic – the system for representing spoken language through written symbols. Letters and clusters of letters represent the sounds of speech. Punctuation is included as it relates to the intonation patterns of spoken language.

All three cueing systems are important to the reading process and are used simultaneously. Fluent reading requires going beyond the 'mechanics' of the reading process, which involves attention to words and the spelling of words, to extract meaning from the words. (Gibson and Levin 1975; Goodman 1968) Some poor readers apparently have mastered the mechanical aspects of reading but continue to process the text word by word, not using contextual semantic relations and syntactic information to comprehend meaning. (Cromer 1970)

4.4 Two theoretical models for reading acquisition

There are two major theoretical models of reading acquisition for beginning readers and second language English learners: bottom-up (word-centred) and top-down (meaning-centred).

4.4.1 Bottom-up model or word-centred model

In the bottom-up model or word-centred model of reading, it is thought that the reader processes print from letter to word to sentence to whole text. The emphasis is on the graphophonic and syntactic systems.

4.4.2 Top-down model or meaning-centred approach

The top-down model or meaning-centred approach places emphasis on the readers's world knowledge rather than on the actual words themselves. Attention is on the semantic system.

4.4.3 Combination of two models

Both models are useful and it is important that they actually work together in order to encompass all three cueing systems. Rapid accurate recognition of letters and words (bottom-up) must be mastered before fluent reading can take place. At the same time, for understanding to take place, readers must be able to make the links between the new information in the text to their own background knowledge (top-down).

For effective second language reading instruction, rather than thinking of reading as a top-down or bottom-up process, it is more useful to see reading as a complex operation where the processing at one level interacts with processing at another. This represents a whole to part to whole methodology. According to the interactive approach (Carr and Levy

1990), proficient readers use both bottom-up and top-down processing and successful comprehension is the result of interaction between the two.

4.5 Linguistic and Cognitive Processes in Reading

To try to explain reading learning in children and beginning second additional language English learners, researchers have identified various linguistic and cognitive processes that children use in their reading. The aim of the research is to understand how these processes develop, how they operate during reading and how learning experiences affect their development. Three beginning stages can be determined: prereading – when children acquire oral language and learn letters; decoding – when children establish that there is a relationship between letter names and sounds and learn how to turn written words into meaningful oral language; confirmation/fluency – children's word reading becomes more rapid, automatic and co-ordinated and they are able to comprehend what is read. (Chall 1983) Learning to read involves learning new strategies at each stage and learning to use them together. By the end of the fluency stage, learners have mastered the technical aspects of reading and can use reading effectively to acquire knowledge.

- ✎ a) In the prereading or emergent literacy stage, the foundations of reading are formed as children learn to comprehend and

produce language. Vocabulary knowledge as well as world knowledge is gained through verbal interactions with others. Listening to stories read aloud is important in this stage as well. Reading aloud expands vocabulary and provides familiarity with the structure of written language. In listening, children have the opportunity to begin to make connections between the text with what they already know. They also develop memory for the texts they have already heard, which allows for further links of knowledge. This information is used to predict what words and ideas might come next and to confirm or modify those predictions. Prereaders begin paying more attention to print when they learn about letters and sounds and acquire the concept of what a "word" is.

- b) In the decoding stage, establishing the relationship between letters and sounds is essential. The decoding stage starts when it is apparent that children are attaching specific sounds to letters in their reading and writing. Even though beginners do not know how to spell words correctly, they are able to use their letter knowledge and awareness of some sounds in words to invent readable spellings of words. Both spelling and reading require knowledge of the alphabetic system.

Beginning readers who can use letter-sound relationships to read sight words and to invent spellings have begun the decoding stage. These readers then continue to put vowel and consonant sounds together into blends of phonemes in order to form pronunciations that they recognise as real words.

Transition to the confirmation/fluency stage occurs when children become more proficient in using the alphabetic system to process words. Development at this stage involves achieving accurate and autonomous skill in word reading. Not only do sight vocabularies grow, but also the ability to read familiar words speeds up. Sight words are recognised accurately in or out of context because their written forms are fully connected to pronunciation and meanings in memory. Sight words are recognised automatically, without conscious attention or effort. They are seen as single words rather than isolated letters and sounds.

- c) In the fluency stage, all processes are working together smoothly. According to interactive theories, accurate, fluent reading is the result of a number of different processes

operating together. "As the eyes move along a line of text, sight words are recognised quickly and unconsciously; their meanings are integrated with the readers cumulative memory for the text; linguistic and world knowledge confirms that the words read are consistent with the sentence structure and previously read information; unfamiliar words attract attention momentarily as recoding, reasoning and predicting serve to identify or confirm the identification of these words; self-monitoring processes initiate checking and rereading if inconsistencies arise." (Stanovich 1991) As reading becomes more fluent and less time and attention are spent consciously identifying words, there is more working memory space available for comprehension of the text.

The most essential factor contributing to growth during the fluency stage is significant reading practice. The more exposure readers have to reading in this stage, the stronger the interaction between processes used in reading. There is a strong association between reading ability and the amount of text read during the fluency stage. (Chall 1983) This stage ends when students master the mechanics of reading well

enough to be successful in acquiring new knowledge from reading experiences.

The basis for fluent reading is automatic word recognition.

"Only to the extent that the ability to recognise and capture the meaning of print is rapid, effortless and automatic can the reader have available the cognitive energy and resources on which true comprehension depends." (Adams, 1994) If a reader takes too long to recognise words in a sentence, comprehension is disrupted. According to S. Jay Samuels, this is especially true for beginning readers who are forced to switch their attention back and forth from decoding to constructing meaning, which is slow and frustrating. (1996)

4.6 Components of fluent reading

There are three necessary components for fluent reading: a large sight word vocabulary, a wide general vocabulary and knowledge of the target language, the world and text types.

4.6.1 Large sight word vocabulary

Sight vocabulary implies over-learning words to the point that they are automatically recognised in print. However, this 'over-learning' should not

happen in isolation. Over-emphasising decoding can actually slow down a beginning second language English reader's progress. The best and easiest way to expand sight vocabulary is to read. "Familiarity breeds automaticity." (Bamford and Day, 1988)

Good first language readers have the ability to recognise words automatically, but second language readers typically do not. "Poor readers do not have enough sight vocabulary to take advantage of context. This suggests that second language readers must also have sufficient sight vocabulary in order to be able to read successfully and especially to be able to recognise words in context." (Coady, Carrell and Nation, 1985 p. 10) Carroll, Davis and Richman (1971) suggest that, if a learner knew the meanings of only the most frequent 2000 words of English, he/she would know more than 80% of the vocabulary on an average page of text (at least at the 9th grade level). If students had these 2,000 words in their sight vocabulary, it is more likely that they would be able to use the text in determining meanings of lesser-known or unknown lower frequency words.

Sight word vocabulary should be built up, not from isolated lists of words, but from within whole text. In keeping with the whole – part – whole methodology, first the whole text is used, then certain words are isolated

and “overlearned”, then these words are put back into the text in order to concentrate on meaning in the context.

4.6.2 Wide general vocabulary

General vocabulary knowledge is also essential for comprehension. The larger a child’s vocabulary, the better the comprehension. Research has shown that second language readers rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge and lack of vocabulary knowledge is the largest obstacle for second language readers to overcome. (Ulijn 1981; Anderson 1984)

“Every study of reading achievement points to the importance of vocabulary knowledge.” (C. Chall 1987) William Grabe, an expert in the field of second language reading, says that fluent readers need a “massive receptive vocabulary that is rapidly, accurately and automatically accessed. The lack of such a vocabulary may be the single greatest impediment to fluent reading by ESL students.” (1988) “Recognising that vocabulary acquisition in the context of reading as an important component of second language acquisition has been sadly neglected.” (Coady 1986)

The best way to increase general vocabulary knowledge is to read masses of varied and interesting material. The incidental acquisition hypothesis suggests that there is a “gradual but steady incremental growth of

vocabulary knowledge through meaningful interaction with text.” (Coady 1993)

Incidental learning is crucial for second language students who cannot depend on classroom instruction alone to meet all of their vocabulary needs. (Stoller and Grabe 1988) So second language learners need to be encouraged to read as much as possible. Both “narrow reading” and “wide reading” are useful. In narrow reading, a student reads large quantities of the same type of book from the same genre. This provides repeated exposure to a specific vocabulary, syntax and content. In wide reading, books from a wide range of topics and genres are read. This helps to expose the student to many new words, concepts and world knowledge. When young children have ongoing meaningful experiences with print, they develop ‘the roots of literacy.” (Y. Goodman 1986)

4.6.3 Knowledge of target language and the world

Like sight words and general vocabulary knowledge, knowledge of the target language and the world is best acquired through large amounts of reading. “The more reading done, of the greatest informational variety and range of purposes, the quicker the reader will achieve...the capacity for creating, refining and connecting diverse arrays of cognitive schemata.” (Grabe 1986) For this connection to take place, learners

must develop 'cohesion'. Cohesion is what makes the difference between a list of unrelated sentences and a group of sentences that together form a whole. Fluent readers can carry meaning across large sections of text. Less fluent readers focus on smaller units of meaning such as individual words or single sentences. Being able to carry an idea right through a text depends on the ability to form cohesive links between sentences.

4.6.4 Importance of literate environment

In research done by Teale and Sulzby (1991), literacy development of the young child was traced from birth until the time they learned to read and write conventionally. This observational research showed that children in literate home environments engage in reading and writing long before they begin formal schooling. In a similar study by Pearson (1993), it was found that a great many important concepts and attitudes develop as children encounter print in various forms in the home environment. Seven of these stand out and differentiate children who come from literate home environments and those who do not. Children who come from literacy-rich environments 1) know why we read and write, 2) have a greater knowledge of the world, 3) understand the conventions and jargon of print (book, page, title, etc.), 4) have higher levels of phonological awareness, 5) can read more high frequency words, 6) know many letter

names and sounds, and 7) are eager and confident in their initial reading and writing attempts.

4.7

Background factors to proficiency ✓

Gradman and Hanania (1992) found that the one background factor with the strongest relationship to the level of proficiency in a second language was outside reading – the extent to which students had read outside of the classroom for information or pleasure. “When second language learners read for pleasure, they develop the competence they need to move from the beginning ‘ordinary conversational’ level to a level where they can use the second language for more demanding purposes. When they read for pleasure, they can continue to improve in their second language without direct instruction or without study.”

Second language reading instruction can, and should, allow students to develop into fluent, independent and confident second additional language readers. We learn to read largely by reading. To become more powerful second language readers of English, learners need exposure to lots of books and many words. “Reading is good for you. The research supports a stronger conclusion, however. Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate

vocabulary, advanced grammar and the only way we become good spellers.” (Krashen 1993)

5. Approaches to Instruction of Reading

There is tremendous controversy regarding the ‘correct’ method for the instruction and development of reading skills, which is also true in the area of second language English learners. The two main approaches to reading instruction are the skills or word-centred approach and whole language or meaning-centred approach. I will look at both theoretical orientations to the instruction of reading. I will define each and follow the definitions with a look at the historical roots of the controversy between the two approaches. I will then discuss the advantages and disadvantages. Finally, I will discuss the integration of these two approaches.

5.1 Definition of the skills or word-centred approach

This approach was developed as a result of a particular view of reading. The following is a description of the perspective of reading upon which this approach is based:

“In the mid 1960’s, we tended to view reading as a pretty straightforward, perceptual process. Readers, we thought, accomplished their task by translating graphic symbols (letters) on

a printed page into an oral code (sounds corresponding to those letters). After that, they 'listened' to the sounds and to the words they had produced in the translation process. Comprehension of written material was nothing more than comprehension of speech produced by the reader." (Pearson and Stephen's, 1992, p.4)

In addition to the fact that reading was seen as a translation process, the mechanics of that process were thought to progress from the smallest element to the largest element. That is, the skills approach assumes that the reader first focuses on translating letters, then letter patterns, then words, and so on. Phillip Gough (1972) described this basic process in his account of what happens during one second of reading:

- 1) The reader recognises the bars, slits, edges, curves, angles and breaks in a letter.
- 2) The reader identifies the specific letter signified by the recognised bars, slits, etc.
- 3) The reader continues this process for all the letters in the specific word on which he/she is focusing.
- 4) The reader organises the identified letters into a pattern.
- 5) The reader searches his/her lexical memory in an attempt to match the identified pattern with a known word.

- 6) When a match is made, the recognised word is placed in a semantic memory buffer.

For Gough, comprehension is a process of adding up the meaning of the pieces. As words are recognised, the meaning of phrases and sentences are understood, the meaning of the paragraph is constructed and so on. The central feature of this description of reading is that meaning is gradually built from the 'bottom-up'. The reader begins with nothing and keeps adding pieces until he/she finally constructs the whole.

So, in this perspective, reading instruction is seen as facilitating the mastery of a set of isolated skills. First the student masters one skill, then the next and so on. Of course, the skills that should be mastered first are those that relate directly to the first steps of the reading process: recognising letters and letter/sound relationships. The list of skills to be mastered within the skills approach include the following:

- Recognising letters
- Recognising letter/sound relationships
- Using phonics rules
- Breaking words into syllables
- Figuring out words from context
- Figuring out words using word parts

- Recognising sentence patterns
- Asking and answering literal questions
- Asking and answering inferential questions

Literacy instruction in this approach, then, is organised around the systematic development of specific skills and the task for teachers is clear: develop specific literacy skills in a systematic fashion.

5.2 Definition of whole language or meaning-centred approach

Instead of a precise process of using skills in a bottom-up fashion, K. Goodman (1967) characterised reading as a more imprecise, meaning-driven activity:

"More simply stated, reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game. It involves an interaction between thought and language. Effective reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time. The ability to anticipate that which has not been seen, of course, is vital in reading, just as the ability to anticipate what has not yet been heard is vital in listening." (P.2)

On the basis of this theory of reading with meaning at the core, Goodman (1967) hypothesised a very different reading process, which can be summarised in the following way:

- 1) The reader scans along a line of print from left to right and down the page, line by line.
- 2) He/She fixes at a point to permit eye focus. Some print is central in focus, some is peripheral, allowing the reader to consider single words or short phrases.
- 3) Guided by his/her knowledge of language, the type of text being read and his/her understanding of the topic, the reader picks up semantic and graphic cues.
- 4) At this point, the reader makes a guess or a tentative choice as to the meaning of the word or phrase.
- 5) The reader uses the representation of the text that he/she has already created to determine the reasonableness of his/her choice.
- 6) If the choice is acceptable, the reader forms expectations about the nature and meaning of the text that have not yet been processed.
- 7) The cycle continues.

A comparison of this process with the one described earlier by Gough discloses at least one major difference. The process described by Gough is a bottom-up one in which understanding is driven by recognition of the smallest parts first, the reading process described by Goodman is driven from the 'top-down'. The reader's understanding of what will probably be in the text determines where he/she looks, what he/she looks for and what he/she perceives.

From the principles just described, educators reasoned that reading should be taught in a holistic manner as opposed to teaching specific skills in linear fashion. This general philosophy became known as whole language.

5.3 Historical Roots of the Controversy

Although the skills approach/whole language controversy became quite public in the late 1960's/early 70's, it is actually the continuation of a much earlier debate, sometimes referred to as the phonics/look-say debate. In colonial times in the US, reading instruction followed a simple two-part process – teach children to the code and then have them read. As Marilyn Adams (1990) explained, this translated into a fairly sequential form of instruction focusing on those skills necessary to break the code. Children were first taught the alphabet, then the sounds that

corresponded to the alphabet, then the strategies for attacking unknown words and so on. Children then practised these skills using materials that were read aloud. In short, the earliest form of reading instruction focused on the skills of decoding or phonics.

Children were usually asked to read the Bible or patriotic essays. The interest in the material was not a concern. Practising the code-breaking skills was of primary importance. However, as educators began to seriously consider meaning and its relationship to the reading process, they also began to question what children were reading. As Adams (1990) explained:

“Those involved in education began to ask questions. If children were asked to read only materials for which they are intellectually ready, won’t the meaning-bearing value of the text be self-evident? And if the mechanics of reading are properly subordinated to meaning from the beginning, won’t the mechanics also be easier and more pleasant to master? But if students are immersed only in the ‘dull drill of practice’ of letter-sound correspondence, won’t they be deprived of – even perhaps permanently jaded against – the higher order mental activity of true reading? Indeed, given the seeming irregularity of English

spelling, did instruction in letter-sound correspondence or phonics, as it has come to be called, even make sense?" (Pp. 4 – 5)

Although this notion of "meaning-based" instruction was not as comprehensive as the whole language approach described by Goodman (1986), it can be considered the forerunner to the whole language philosophy. It was then thought by many educators that rather than learn phonics per se, students should learn to read whole words first. (Balmuth 1982)

During the 1930's and 1940's, most major reading programmes used a meaning-first approach in which children were taught to recognise whole words. If a word could not be recognised, context clues were used. Phonics, if taught at all, was used as a supplementary tool.

The whole-word or look-say approach met with challenges in 1955 with the publication of Rudolph Flesch's book *Why Johnny Can't Read*. Flesch argues that phonics instruction was the only sensible way of teaching beginning readers. The rationale underlying this argument was that a knowledge of phonics allows the reader to "sound out" any words that cannot be recognised on sight. In effect, phonics instruction provides students with a decoding tool that can be used in any situation.

Arguments were persuasive enough to shape the future direction of

reading instruction and ensure emphasis on phonics skills. Today, the skills approach/whole language debate is commonly confused with the phonics/look-say debate.

“Today one cannot promote whole language instruction without having many perceive it as a thinly veiled push for ‘look-say’ approaches to word recognition. To some, the very term ‘whole language’ is translated to mean an uninformed and irresponsible effort to replace necessary instruction with ‘touchy-feely’ classroom gratification – and worse. Similarly, the term ‘code-emphasis’ is translated by others into an unenlightened commitment to unending drill and practise at the expense of the motivation of higher-order dimensions of text that make reading worthwhile – and worse.” (Adams 1990)

5.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Each Approach

There is a bit of truth and a bit of error in both approaches. In other words, neither the skills approach or whole language approach is completely right or completely wrong.

5.4.1 Advantages of the Skills Approach

In spite of Goodman’s (1967) arguments to the contrary, the general processes of reading are composed of identifiable skill components. In

fact, much of the research on how the brain works indicates that it is much more compartmentalised than once thought. For example, Lynette Bradley (1983) found that in the initial stages of learning to read, student use distinct visual, phonological and motor strategies.

The major strength of the skills approach then is that it acknowledges the specific skills used in reading. It is now widely agreed that a thorough knowledge of phoneme-grapheme relations is of crucial importance and that learners, especially beginning readers, need phonemic awareness and an understanding of the alphabetic principle. (Chall 1967; Clay 1987; Juel 1991). Juel (1988) also found that beginning readers who were good at decoding were exposed to about twice as many words as those who were not, so the effect of early success appears to be cumulative.

It often appears that good readers do not attend to individual letters and letter patterns, but this is misleading. They appear to read too quickly to process words letter-by-letter, but they do look at letters and syllables and are able to process them quickly because of memories of previously recognised sequences of letters. Using letter-sound relations, they break words down into syllables and graphemes and recognise quickly which are common letter strings. Fluent readers have acquired a variety of strategies and seem to be able to use whichever strategy is necessary for creating

meaning from the text they are reading. They do use knowledge of grammar and make predictions of meaning, but because of the ability to decode, they make fewer guesses than those children who find reading more difficult. (Stanovich 1988)

5.4.2 Disadvantages to Skills Approach

A major flaw of the skills approach is that it is based on the false assumption that because separate skills and subskills of reading exist, they must be taught as independent entities. In fact, the opposite is true. Researchers in language development, such as Roger Brown (1970, 1973) and Carolyn Chomsky (1972) have established that learning the subskills and rules of language is best accomplished in a meaningful context. Children learn language by using it purposefully. There are several problems with the over-reliance on the skills approach in the teaching of reading:

- To read even 1 – 2 syllable words, students need to learn a large number of phonics rules as well as exceptions to those rules;
- Reading in English moves from left to right, but in order to decode words phonetically, it is often necessary to know the end of the word to be able to decode the first part. This requires a right to left movement. To sound out words with

phonics, it is necessary to go to the end of the word and work backward, which can be slow and confusing;

- In English, there are about 45 sounds and only 26 letters.

There is no simple 1:1 relationship. For blending of sounds, what has been learned about basic sounds must be unlearned in order to make the sounds required by blending;

- Students who depend on phonics to sound out words letter by letter often decide reading is not worth the effort.

It is an incomplete conception of reading to think that it is essentially concerned with words. It is much sounder to think of it as being concerned with language and there is much more to language than words. So any approach to reading that limits itself to words alone is likely to be inadequate. The idea seems to be that once students "get the words" the rest will follow. This is not to say that word recognition is not important, but if there is no meaning attached to the recognition of words, this cannot actually be considered 'reading'.

5.4.3 Advantages of Whole Language

The major strength of the whole language approach is the emphasis on purposeful learning. Whereas the skills approach seeks to develop specific skills, commonly at the expense of the authenticity of the learning

situation, whole language emphasises purposeful reading. Students learn to read by reading, not by being taught sounds or words in isolation. Not all children become independent readers at the same time, but constant exposure to reading of whole meaningful texts eventually leads to students becoming skilled language users. "When we look at the broad, still accumulating body of educational research, we see that holistic approaches to literacy clearly remain our best documented, most reliable and most thoroughly proven ways to teach reading to the majority of students." (Daniels, Zemelman & Bizar 1999)

A 1989 research summary by Tunnell and Jacobs showed consistent gains in achievement among students in literature-based, whole language style programs over the previous 20 years. Tunnell and Jacobs found improvement in student test scores not just in regular education classes, but also among students learning English as a second language, students with special needs and children from low socio-economic backgrounds. (1989)

In whole language classrooms, students spend most of their time reading complete texts rather than excerpts, which allows students to see themselves as readers right from the start. Unfortunately, this is not often the case for poor readers or for learners of English as a second language.

Much of their instructional time is spent on skills and decoding rather than 'real' reading.

5.4.4 Disadvantages of Whole Language

The whole language approach sometimes ignores skill development in the name of holistic learning. Without skill development, complex processes like reading cannot be performed efficiently. In fact, some researchers assert that the skills of reading must be learned to the level of automaticity. (LaBerge and Samuels 1976)

Reading involves many skills and subskills, most of which must be executed automatically in the processes are to be performed smoothly and effectively. It is not surprising that developing a skill or subskill to a level of automaticity requires a great deal of systematic practice. It may not always follow that students get this degree of practice in a whole language classroom. "To become readers, children must learn the connections between letters of the alphabet and the sounds they represent. Teachers must make sure their students understand the phonetic system. A teacher with a class of thirty pupils cannot do that in the context of literature. Such phonics instruction is merely incidental – and inadequate. Sometimes you have to take things out of context to teach them effectively." (J. Chall 1983)

5.5 Conclusion

In summary, learning a complex process like reading requires the execution of specific skills and subskills at an automatic, even subconscious level. The whole language approach makes no explicit provisions for the development of important skills and subskills, whereas the skills approach does. However, the whole language approach does emphasise the critically important principle that learning skills should occur as a by-product of engagement in meaningful relevant tasks.

6. Additional components of Effective Reading Instruction

Because both word-centred and meaning-centred approaches have merit, it seems logical to integrate the two. An instructional approach that emphasises holistic tasks, but that allows for emphasis on specific skills and subskills would preserve the strengths of both approaches. This would essentially be a programme that starts with the whole concept, moves to parts that make up the whole and puts it back into the whole for the greatest benefit of all students. This type of programme would utilise the positive aspects of both approaches without over-reliance on any one method. There are several essential elements that are part of a successful integrated reading programme. Two key elements are extensive reading and Literature Circles. In this next section, I will give

an overview of each and emphasise the benefits, especially to second language English students.

6.1 Extensive reading

In extensive reading, learners have access to large quantities of reading material which is of a variety of reading and interest levels. According to Bamford and Day (1997), extensive reading is "real world reading for a pedagogical purpose." (P 5) Extensive reading is intended to "develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure necessary to encourage a liking for reading." (Richards, Platt & Platt 1992) These practices grow directly out of one of the oldest, strongest and simplest bodies of literary research, which shows that independent reading correlates highly with reading growth. (Anderson, Wilson and Fielding 1988) Because there are many kinds of reading and many purposes for reading, students need to read for a range of purposes and within a variety of contexts in order to become proficient and knowledgeable readers.

Bright and McGregor (1971) argue that reading is the core of the English language syllabus, especially for second language learners. Among the reasons are the following:

- a) Books provide most students with situations in which learning takes place. Where there is little reading there will be little language learning.
- b) Only by reading can students acquire the speed and skills necessary for practical purposes outside of school.
- c) Further education depends upon the quality and quantity of reading.
- d) General knowledge depends on reading.

In a two-year study in Fiji, by the end of the first year, the group doing free reading had made substantial improvement in the skills of reading and listening - well above their counterparts receiving direct language instruction only. By the end of the second year, the improvement extended to all aspects of English language abilities, including oral and written. (Elley and Mangubhai 1983 p. 409)

Tse and McQuillan (1998) reached similar conclusions at the end of a study of second language English students who did extensive reading and received no grammar instruction during a ten-week session. The majority of students found reading to be superior over traditional instruction in reading, "not only in terms of pleasure, but also in perceived benefits in language acquisition." (P 266)

6.1.1 Characteristics of Extensive Reading

There are several characteristics of the extensive reading approach:

- Students read as much as possible, both in and outside of the classroom;
- A variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available to encourage reading for different reasons and in different ways;
- Students select what they want to read and have the freedom to stop reading materials that don't interest them;
- Purposes of reading are related to pleasure, information and understanding;
- Reading is its own reward;
- Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Students will become better readers and learn more through their reading when they are provided with materials that they can read easily. This means books students can read with approximately 98% accuracy in word identification and that include mostly familiar concepts and vocabulary. (Bells 1954) Generally speaking, when students are missing more

that 10 words per 100 (less than 90%) the material is too difficult and the readers' experience is unproductive and frustrating;

- Reading is individual and at the students' own pace. Reading pace is usually faster rather than slower because the material is easily understandable;
- The teacher is a role model of a reader for students, demonstrating the rewards of being a reader. "We need to be seen laughing over books, being unable to put books down, sobbing over sad stories, gasping over horror stories – anything, in fact, that helps students realise that there is some reward, that there are many rewards, to be had from the act of reading." (Mem Fox, 1993)

6.1.2 Extensive vs. intensive reading

The majority of reading done by second language English readers should be extensive rather than intensive. A large quantity of books should be read with an emphasis on meaning (extensive) rather than a study of one text, line by line (intensive). This allows for a focus on meaning rather than on specific parts of language only. Although it is important to study some texts in detail, a primary goal should be for students to understand and enjoy texts and to explore diverse works independently.

In 1971, Thompson looked back to 1937 and summarised 40 studies comparing skills-based basal programs with literature-based approaches that stressed wide independent reading. Of the 40 studies, 24 favoured literature programs, 1 favoured basal readers and 15 showed no significant difference in achievement.

“The primary consideration in all reading instruction should be for students to experience reading as pleasurable and useful. Only then will they be drawn to do the reading they must do to become fluent readers. And only then will they develop an eagerness to learn new skills to help them become better readers.” (Bamford and Day 1997) One of the best ways to encourage large amounts of reading and increase students’ pleasure and interest in reading is to allow students to choose their own reading material. This practice is referred to as ‘free voluntary reading’ (FVR). FVR means reading what you want to read, with no book reports, no questions at the end of the chapter and not having to finish a book if you don’t want to. (Krashen 1993) Children need to be encouraged to take responsibility for their own choice of reading material from as early as possible because they need to build up positive attitudes to books and reading in general.

During the past fifteen years, research has been accumulating about the importance of children selecting and reading books of their own choosing. The Centre for the Study of Reading reports that the single factor most strongly associated with reading achievement – more than socio-economic status or any instructional approach – is independent reading. (Anderson, Wilson and Fielding 1988) In other words, children who read on their own, who read books they have chosen for themselves, become the strongest readers. Free reading is one way to help students move from easier to more difficult reading materials.

6.2 Literature Circles

A second important element in an integrated instructional approach to reading which works alongside extensive reading is literature circles. Literature circles do not make up the entire reading curriculum, but rather are part of a balanced, student-centred program. "In this classroom structure, the students are the ones making the choices, raising the questions, doing the talking and making the meaning." (Daniels, 1994 P 7) This is at the heart of literature circles.

6.2.1 Rationale for Literature Circles

The following is the rationale for literature circles: (Hill 1997)

Literature circles:

- Promote a love of literature and positive attitudes toward reading
- Reflect a constructivist, child-centred model of literacy
- Encourage extensive reading (and intensive when appropriate)
- Invite natural discussions that lead to student inquiry and critical thinking
- Support diverse responses to texts
- Foster interaction and collaboration
- Provide choice and encourage responsibility
- Expose children to literature from multiple perspectives
- Nurture reflection and self-evaluation

Literature Circles are based on the transactional theory. Students actively construct understandings by bringing meaning to, as well as taking meaning from, a text. The primary focus is for students to use literature to learn about life and make sense of the world.

6.2.2 Importance of Literature Discussions

One of the major benefits of literature circles is the opportunity for students to meet and talk about commonly read books. "When readers

discuss insights, raise questions, cite related experiences, wonder about or puzzle over situations prompted by what they read, literature takes on a new life.” (Hill 1995) All children can take part in this benefit because the discussions acknowledge the ideas, experiences and interpretations of all readers. A literature-based program should foster the spirit of curiosity as well as the appreciation of literature. Reading lots of books and being able to discuss them with others is a powerful way to spark a love of reading and deepen children’s understanding of the world around them. “When children discover enjoyment in books, they develop favourable attitudes toward them that usually extend into a lifetime of appreciation.” (Norton 1991) A central principle in literature circles, as in extensive reading, is student choice. When students are able to read books they actually want to read, this leads to deeper understanding and more personal response to reading. Experts agree that helping children *want* to read is an essential part of helping children *learn* to read.

It is not enough to share literature with children. Children need opportunities to respond to what they have read or heard to construct meaning, to relate the story to their own lives, to comment on ideas and emotions that a story has evoked. They do not need comprehension questions, but time to reflect. Comprehension is assumed, because children are reading books that are within their reading level, so the

emphasis is on children's individual responses, on how they construct meaning for themselves. The more children talk about the books they read, the more their comprehension deepens.

Literature discussions support the belief that students are able to have rich discussions about meaning if they have regular opportunities to engage with books from a transactional perspective. "There can be no absolute, single correct way of responding to literature; the meaning is neither lying in the text awaiting discovery, nor is it solely in the experiences readers bring to reading. Readers should be allowed and encouraged to construct their own unique meanings as they read."

(Rosenblatt 1978) Literature circles recognise that learners bring prior experiences with them to books that they read – prior experiences that will influence construction of meaning. This demonstrates the transaction between reader and text. But literature study also recognises that learning is social and readers can learn from interpretations of texts if they share meanings and listen to the interpretations of others. (Peterson and Eeds 1994)

Literature circles help students to become not just skilled competent readers, but thoughtful responsive readers as well. They allow children to discuss what they see as important in the story and discuss their

questions and responses, not the teacher's. When students are encouraged to respond to each other and to literature, they become empowered as readers, writers and thinkers. The discussions can give them the opportunity to discuss issues of genuine concern to them and can help them to make sense of the world. "If we wish to open the world of literacy to our children, what they are asked to read should, from the very beginning, help them to understand themselves and their world." (Bruno Bettelheim 1981)

Research has shown that talking together is one of the most important avenues by which children learn to think. Research has also shown that in order for children to become competent language learners, they need many opportunities to engage in meaningful talk in the classroom. (Cazden 1988; Cullinan 1993; Short 1992) Through engaging in meaningful talk, children clarify their thoughts and understandings about what they have read, which in turn, helps them to become more confident language users. (Cullinan 1993)

6.2.3 Importance of Independent Reading

We know that the amount of time spent reading separates successful from unsuccessful readers (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding 1988; Stanovich 1986) and that allowing students to just read is the only way for them to

become truly engaged in reading. (Nell 1988; Csikszentmihalyi 1990) In many cases, however, only good readers – who are more likely to read outside of school anyway – get opportunities to read in school for any worthwhile period of time. Struggling readers, especially those in special programs such as ESL, typically get low-level, isolated skill instruction rather than real opportunities to read. (Johnston & Allington 1991) Even in regular classrooms, teachers may vary instruction for students in ways that hurt rather than help struggling readers; for example, by slowing the pace of instruction. This results in students having fewer overall experiences with print. (Allington 1994) This differentiation in instruction may actually increase reading differences among students.

Sadly, in the average primary school, children read silently for only 7 – 8 minutes per day – less than 10% of instructional time. (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson 1985) Students from lower socio-economic groups, attending schools where they are viewed as at risk for reading failure, actually do less independent reading than students in more privileged and higher achieving schools. (Allington 1983) So, children who need independent reading the most are least likely to get it.

6.3

Motivation

Literacy learning is influenced by a variety of motivational factors. Self-perceived competence and task value are major determinants of motivation. Eccles (1983) proposed the “expectancy value” theory of motivation – motivation is strongly influenced by the expectation of success or failure at a task as well as “value” the individual places on the task. People will attempt to attain goals they value and perceive as achievable. (Ford 1992)

Motivation is of utmost importance in the teaching of reading and especially when expecting students to make reading a lifelong habit. When reading is regarded as a meaningful purpose-oriented activity and as part of a communicative process, student motivation becomes an important aspect in the teaching of reading. To be a reader means not only being able to read but also to *want* to read. Well developed reading skills are of little value if the student’s attitude toward books and reading is such that he will read only when he feels he has to, but never of his own free will. “The primary consideration in all reading instruction should be for students to experience reading as pleasurable and useful. Only then will they be drawn to do the reading they must do to become fluent readers. And only then will they develop an eagerness to learn new skills to help them become better readers.” (Bamford and Day 1997)

6.3.1 Counter influences to motivation to read

The major counter influence to getting children to read – and want to read – is the competition with the faster-paced, attention-grabbing media of television, video games and computers. Recent research at the National Institute of Mental Health conducted by Peter Jensen concluded, “Extensive exposure to television and video games may promote development of brain systems that scan and shift attention at the expense of those that focus attention. The earlier children acquire the habit of passive television watching, the more likely attention spans will not develop normally.

The ability to sustain concentration and mentally focus over a period of time is an internal process that must be developed. This development is largely dependent of the surrounding environment. “All the right ingredients in the external world will ensure that development. The wrong ingredients will hinder it.” (DeGaetano 2003)

In a report released recently by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Children’s Digital Media Centres, it was found that very young children who live in homes where the television is on most of the time might have more trouble learning to read than other children of the same age. In

“heavy TV households”, 34% of children ages 4 – 6 can read, compared to 56% in homes where the television is on less often.

In the same study, it was found that children in the six months to 6-year-old age group spend about 2 hours a day watching television, playing video games or using a computer. This is approximately the same amount of time spent playing outdoors and three times as long as they spend reading or being read to. However, the report said that reading does continue to be a regular part of children’s lives. Almost 80% of children six years old and under read or are being read to every day. Still, children spend only 40 minutes on average with books in a day, compared with 2 hours and 22 minutes in front of a television or computer screen. (2003)

This is certainly an area requiring more research in order to determine specific effects of television and reading motivation. It is a difficult task faced by teachers as to how to compete with the modern technological world.

6.3.2 Importance of Reading Aloud to Students

One way to compete with the media of television is to read aloud to children. Reading aloud to children is an important part of the

introduction to, as well as the maintenance of, the interest in books and reading. "Reading aloud is the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading." (C. Chomsky 1972; Dukin 1966; McCormack 1977) Being read to encourages literacy, promotes reading skills and contributes to the sharing of the joy of literature. As children listen and respond to literature, they predict, make inferences, hypothesise, identify with characters, respond critically and creatively and develop a sense of story. "Reading stories aloud to children has long been advocated as a natural device for promoting children's acquisition of English." (Tompkins & McGee 1981)

Children who are used to hearing stories are better able to benefit from reading instruction. Hearing stories encourages reading, which in turn promotes literacy development. There is a great deal of evidence that hearing stories has a direct impact on literacy development. In controlled studies, it has been shown that children who are read to regularly for several months make superior gains in reading comprehension and vocabulary. (Cohen 1968; Feitelson, Kita & Goldstein 1986) Short-term studies show significant increases in vocabulary knowledge after just a few hearings of stories containing unfamiliar words. (Eller, Pappas & Brown 1988) Reading aloud is especially beneficial to learners of English as a second language because it provides "authentic, natural and

uninterrupted texts with contextual support from illustrations.” (Allen 1989)

Chapter Three

Research Design and Methodology

1. Introduction

1.1 Research questions

This chapter presents the research design, classroom structure and approach, methods used for collecting data, the participants in the study and the data collection procedures. The research methodology used here aims to collect data, which will enable me to address the following questions:

- Is motivation a significant factor in determining reading proficiency and overall levels of literacy in students learning English as a second additional language?
- Does enhanced motivation as set up by the use of Literature Circles and their associated operations and practices, improve reading proficiency and overall levels of literacy?

The data was collected by means of qualitative research methods. This included questionnaires, observation (both participant and non-participant), and reading assessments. The results of the assessments are reported in quantitative numerical format.

1.2 Research Design

Along with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, the data collected in this study will help provide answers and information with regard to the research questions stated above. Ultimately, the findings will help to reach conclusions pertaining to successful classroom approaches to reading for learners of English as a second language. The emphasis of the research will be on approaches to increase the motivation to read.

The methodology used was to create a classroom structure based on Literature Circles and Extensive Reading, which provide access to a print-rich environment for students. "For many children reading for pleasure is an alien concept, and attaining literacy a difficult process. Learning to read requires an ongoing immersion in a print-rich environment." (Cape Argus, January 26, 2004) The effects on motivation to reading and levels of reading proficiency were then measured.

The theoretical grounding that supports the methodology used is based on the link between motivation to read and reading achievement. (Elley 1992; Guthrie, Schafer, Wang and Afflerback 1993; Purves and Beach 1972; Wixson and Lipson 1991) We need to increase the understanding of how children acquire the motivation to develop into active engaged

readers. According to recent research, children who are exposed to literature at an early age and in vast quantities have a huge advantage over other children not only in the achievement of reading, but also in becoming life-long readers. "Learning to read for those who do not grow up in a print-rich environment, or for those who do not come from a culture of reading, is a different story, and there are many obstacles to achieving even basic literacy." (Bloch 2004)

According to Guthrie (1996), highly motivated readers generate their own literacy learning opportunities. Research supports the notion that literacy learning is influenced by a variety of motivational factors. (Dec and Ryan 1991; Eccles 1983; Ford 1992; Kuhl 1986; McCombs 1991; Wigfield 1994) According to Eccles 1983), students who believe they are capable and competent readers are more likely to outperform those who do not. Children who have made positive associations with reading tend to read more often, for longer periods of time and with greater intensity. This deeper engagement translates into superior reading achievement. (Anderson, Fielding and Wilson 1988; Foertsch 1992) At the same time, when children have a negative perception of reading, achievement tends to suffer. These children either avoid reading altogether or read with little or no involvement.

The research done in this study is of particular interest in South Africa, as according to research done by the Western Cape Education Department, more than 60% of pupils in the Western Cape are not achieving the reading and numeracy learning outcomes at the level set in the national curriculum. This study also found that only 32% of Grade 3 learners are reading at the Grade 3 level. (South Africa Department of Education 2003)

The information in this study was gathered by means of empirical inquiry. The data collected is quantitative in nature and was collected using the survey method, relying primarily on questionnaires, personal interviews and structured observations.

1.3 Data Collection

Data were collected with two aims in mind:

- a) To observe and monitor changes in attitude and motivation toward reading;
- b) To observe and monitor changes in reading ability and reading strategies.

1.3.1 Attitudes and motivation

The instruments used for data collection in measuring attitudes toward reading and the motivation to read include:

- Observations
- Motivation to Read Profile
- Reader Self Perception Scale
- Questionnaires
- Interviews

1.3.2 Reading ability and use of strategies

The instruments used for data collection to monitor reading ability and strategies used in reading include:

- Reading ladders
- Miscue analysis
- Developmental reading continuums
- Metacomprehension Strategy Index

1.4 Conclusion

This collection of data will facilitate reaching conclusions about instructional methods used to increase reading proficiency and the motivation to read in students learning English as a second language.

2. Presentation

This chapter will consist of three sections:

- Part One – Introduction and explanation of the sample used for the study, including the settings, participants and general information contributing to the conditions of the study.
- Part Two – The instructional method used in the classroom will be discussed as well as the rationale behind this method. The use of Literature Circles as part of the methodology will be highlighted.
- Part Three – I will explain in detail the various survey methods applied by giving a description of the instruments that were used for data collection as well as the corresponding response formats.

2.1 Setting

The majority of the research was done at Bahrain Bayan School.

However, data were also collected at Mountain Road Primary School for comparative analysis as well as to generate further information for the study.

2.1.1 Bahrain

Bahrain Bayan School is located in Bahrain, which is a very small island off the coast of Saudi Arabia. It is a private school and is considered to be the top school on the island. There are 1200 students in the school from

Grade R to Grade 12. Most children who attend the school are from very wealthy prominent families, many of them from the Al Khalifa royal family. Because of this prominence, there is tremendous pressure on students to excel.

Students must complete an entrance exam to be accepted into the school. However, if the students are from the royal family or other highly prominent families, the test is a formality – they will be accepted. Also, certain students could not receive failing or poor grades, so there was often a wide range of abilities in one classroom, even with the entrance exam. The average number of students in one class is 20 – 25.

The curriculum is quite challenging as students have a full Arabic curriculum and full English curriculum. In the primary grades, students are taught English Language Arts, Arabic Language Arts, Math (in Arabic until Grade Two, English from Grade Three), Religion and Social Studies in Arabic, Science in English, Art in English, Music (half the year in English, half in Arabic), physical education (Arabic until Grade One, English from Grade Two) and computer classes (in English). The number of subjects taught in English increases in the secondary school. The curriculum for the senior school follows the British IB programme.

As the language of teaching and learning was both English and Arabic, there were obviously English and Arabic-speaking teachers. Most of the English-speaking teachers were from Canada, America or the UK. Most of the Arabic-speaking teachers were from Bahrain, Egypt or nearby Gulf countries. The average age of the Arabic teachers was 36 and the average age of the English teachers was 30. The average number of years at the school for Arabic teachers was 6 and English teachers 2. The English staff tended to be more transient, which did cause problems in consistency of following the curriculum and putting various teaching procedures into place.

Because of the affluence of the population at Bahrain Bayan School, the school had quite a large budget. There was no shortage of resources, the only drawback being delivery time as everything was imported. The average annual budget for the primary English department alone was approximately BD 80,000, with 60% of that going towards books. With the current exchange rate, that amount is approximately R960, 000 just for books.

A large number of the students have extra tuition after school to keep up with the curriculum, although the school discourages this. In one extreme example, one of the students reached home at 15h00, ate lunch with his

family until 15h30. At 15h30 until 18h30, he had tutoring for his English subjects. At 18h30, he then went to an Arabic tutor for the Arabic subjects. At around 21h30, he returned home, ate dinner and went to bed. Needless to say, he was a very unmotivated student. This is, as I mentioned, an extreme example, but this degree of pressure on students was not uncommon. It was extremely important to parents that their children be academically successful, by any means necessary. Cheating was a huge problem in the school and I had numerous experiences of parents (or tutors) doing homework for children.

One consequence, among many, of this type of pressure on children is their fear of making mistakes. There was an over dependence on the teacher and very little risk taking on the part of the students. However, one can sympathise. I found that often as much parent education had to be done as student education.

Because of the affluence of the families, most students had very few responsibilities. All students were brought to school by either a driver or their parents and a nanny also accompanied most who then carried their book bag and often unpacked the books into the locker in the morning and packed the bag in the afternoon. The excuse, "My nanny forgot to pack it" was an all-too-frequent excuse for missing homework. This lack

of responsibility carried over into the classroom and added to the dependency on the teacher. The major complaint of teachers at the school was the seeming inability of students to think for themselves. This complaint was heard from English and Arabic teachers, from nursery through to teachers of graduating seniors. In regard to this issue, I do not feel that as a school we did enough to encourage risk taking, but I will deal with this issue in subsequent sections.

2.1.2 Mountain Road Primary School

Mountain Road Primary School is located in Woodstock in Cape Town, South Africa. There are approximately 700 students in the school from Grade R to Grade 7. The children who attend the school are predominately "coloured" and the majority come from Muslim families. Most families are classified socioeconomically as working class.

There is no entrance exam for the school, but children are interviewed before being placed in the school. The school has no specific 'remedial' programme as such, but as in Bahrain, there is an extremely wide range of abilities in one classroom. The number of students in one class ranges from 27 – 48.

All of the teachers at Mountain Road Primary School, excluding myself, are from South Africa. The average age of the teachers is 37 and the average number of years at the school is 7.

Mountain Road does not have access to the wealth of resources that Bahrain does. There is a tight budget and very little money is spent on books. Most class readers are of the "Janet and John", "Kathy and Mark" variety. Only in Grade 7 do they have a classroom novel, which is *I Am David*.

The curriculum is based on OBE and follows the standards set by the (2002) South African Revised National Curriculum. The language of learning and teaching is English. Students have 2 periods of Afrikaans per week and 2 periods of Xhosa. Portuguese is also offered. The school has recently added a computer lab that is run by an outside company. Students must pay an additional R40 per month to attend computer classes. The average number of students who attend per grade is 10. Students attend one art class per week and have intramurals each Monday. The school also offers an extensive extramural programme.

2.2 The Participants

2.2.1 Bahrain

The study at Bahrain Bayan School was conducted using 75 Grade Five students over the course of one school year. The students were divided into 3 classes of 25 in each. The ages ranged from 9 – 12 with the average age being 10.3. 99% of the students were second language English learners with Arabic or Persian as the first language. The majority of students had been in this particular school from the age of three, so had at least six years of English instruction prior to Grade Five.

Most students in the study were at least at a fundamental literacy level (around Grade Four) in Arabic. However, the Arabic language class that was part of the curriculum was classical Arabic, which is very different from the Bahraini dialect they spoke. So, the proficiency levels in the actual Arabic class were diverse. Many students reported that English class was easier than Arabic, which seems surprising coming from native Arabic speakers.

A few students, upon entering Grade Five, were at a fundamental level of literacy in English. Even fewer were at a level of fluency, especially in reading. One of the largest contributing factors was the lack of exposure they had to English outside of the classroom. This and other factors will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections.

2.2.2 Mountain Road Primary School

At Mountain Road Primary School, research was conducted using 53 Grade 5 students. Most of the research was done from June through the end of the school year. The ages of the students ranged from 10 – 13, with the average age being 11.9. 56% of the students spoke English as a first language, 38% were Xhosa-speaking and 6% had Afrikaans as a first language. It should be noted, however, that these percentages come from self-reporting by the students. The number of students speaking Afrikaans as a first language is actually much higher, but students are reluctant to report that as being the case. An interesting observation is that students with Xhosa as a first language were much more forthcoming with that information than Afrikaans speaking students.

52% of the Grade Five students had attended Mountain Road Primary since Grade One.

2.3 Previous Instruction

2.3.1 Bahrain

The type of English Language Arts instruction these students were accustomed to was the use of a basal programme – the Harcourt Brace *Treasury of Literature* series. This programme was used from Grade One

through Grade Five. There were, in my opinion, numerous problems with the basal series for this population. Some of them include:

- The basal programme was American-based, which meant there was very little relevance for students and the vocabulary was unfamiliar. (For example, an excerpt from the story "The Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson" was included in the Grade Five anthology. The majority of students had no knowledge of the game of baseball much less a man named Jackie Robinson. Not to mention that the 'boar' did not sit well with the 99% Muslim audience);
- The stories were excerpts. The students didn't actually get to read a book from beginning to end;
- There were five workbooks that accompanied the programme (practice book, spelling workbook, grammar handbook, grammar practice book and writer's journal). This left very little room for individual expression on the part of the students or the teacher. The students were, in effect, 'spoon-fed' the information in order to cover everything;
- The grammar segment of the programme focused on structure rather than practical usage;

- There was a list of 170 objectives the teacher was to cover and students were to master throughout the course of the year;
- The time constraint was tremendous. There was no time for additional reading or writing while trying to get through the programme;
- The general feeling of most students was that reading was boring.

Only one year previously had there been a shift to include literature in the English curriculum and a novel had been added to each grade level. My students had read *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White together as a class in Grade Four. In addition to the basal programme and the novel, they had been required to do one research project (on a country – all using the same format) and three book reports during the school year.

In the Arabic classes, most of the instruction was based on rote memorisation. They did cover grammar and some spelling, but most of the students – and teachers – found this quite difficult, so memorisation was used most often. This was, in my opinion, largely a result of how students learned the Quran as well, so it was familiar. According to some of the Arabic teachers, the students who did well in class were the students who could memorise.

There was very little 'recreational' reading in Arabic classes. One reason for this was, as in English classes, lack of time. Also, the publishing of books in Arabic is far behind that of English books, especially for children. Most of the children's books are unattractive, with few or no pictures and complex language. There is a movement to improve the quality of children's books in Arabic, but this will take some time. This hinders the motivation of many students to read for enjoyment in Arabic.

This was the starting point of the students at BBS in this study at the beginning of the school year.

2.3.2 Mountain Road Primary School

The research conducted at Mountain Road differed from that done in Bahrain because I was not a classroom teacher for Grade Five, but rather for Grade R. However, to get a view of literacy instruction at the school, I spoke to the teachers from Grade R – 7 and sat in on some of their lessons over a ten-week period. My findings were as follows:

- There is very little consistency or progression in the teaching of reading at MRPS. In Grades R – 2, there is a focus almost entirely on phonics with the teachers using the Letterland programme.

- In Grades 3 and up, there is no more phonics, and, in fact, very little reading.
- Only one teacher read aloud to students on a daily basis.
- There was not much recreational reading, which many teachers attributed to lack of resources. Many of the readers are old and the majority published prior to 1970. One Grade Two teacher complained that even if kids did want to read, there was nothing that held their attention and this interest soon died.
- In Grade Three, the teachers conducted a unit based on a book, complete with role-playing, projects, writing activities, etc. and it was such a success that an entire Friday staff development was dedicated to hearing about the unit.
- In the same staff development meeting, a Grade Five teacher stated that it was not their responsibility at the Grade Five level to “teach” students to read and they just continue with the curriculum and assume students know how to read.
- In Grades R – 3, instruction is centred on themes, most of which included books of some sort. However, in Grades 4 – 7, students work through modules and only two during the year included reading; one module on poetry and the other centred on the novel *I Am David*.

- The time spent on reading or literacy in general decreased rapidly after Grade R. The following are approximate times dedicated to literacy in Grades R – 7 based on informal interviews with teachers and a look at the yearly plans as well as weekly lesson plans (It is to be noted that this includes time spent on grammar instruction):
 - Grade R – 75 minutes per day
 - Grade One – 45 minutes per day
 - Grade Two – 45 minutes per day
 - Grade Three – 30 minutes per day
 - Grade Four – 10 minutes per day
 - Grades 5 – 7 – approximately 30 minutes per week, depending on the module being covered. The time span ranged from 30 minutes a day to no time at all during the week.

3. Instructional Method

Because of the different circumstances in Bahrain and at Mountain Road, I will give details only of the instructional method used while in Bahrain, as this is pertinent to the research. The reading programme at Mountain

Road will be discussed in the final chapter of this report as it is still in the beginning stages.

The instructional method used in the classroom was based on a constructivist learner-centred approach. The reading programme utilised Literature Circles as the core. Skills and phonics were integrated into the whole programme, with additional instruction provided as necessary for individual students.

3.1 Background

The year I undertook this study was my fifth year at Bayan School. Throughout the first 4 years, I had looked at various ways to improve motivation of my students, especially in regard to reading because the majority of them came in claiming to "hate reading". It was difficult to get them to read as much as was necessary to improve their skills. I had tried various programmes and incentives, but found that the time was too constrictive. In my second year, I moved away from the basal programme and included three novel units. I was told by the administration that I could not disregard the basal entirely because the rest of the primary school was still using the basal as the entire programme. At the beginning of my third year, I was made Head of the Primary English Department, so this gave me more leeway as well as

more opportunity to try to change the programme from the basal to one that was more literature-based. During my third year, I was only using the basal for supplementary purposes and was using novels as the main part of the curriculum. This move was met with scepticism on the part of administrators and parents. Both relied on "lots of paper", as was generated by the numerous workbooks, and lots of grades to show that students were making progress. However, it did not take long for them to notice the increased enthusiasm for English and especially reading. One could hear the students talking about books; more students were walking around carrying books. Because of this and in examining the curriculum closely, a shift also started happening in the Primary English curriculum as a whole. Books were being purchased for classroom libraries, a book fair was scheduled, and teachers were given permission to move away from the basal programme. This was met with enthusiasm by some, but not all as it is actually more difficult and time-consuming to leave the step-by-step basal programme.

In my fourth year, I experimented with various approaches but was still trying to piece together what made the difference between students who loved to read and students who saw it as drudgery. At the end of the year, after attending a reading conference, I tried Literature Circles in the classroom. This brought out a side to the reluctant readers I had not

seen before. They were thrilled with the independence of deciding what to read, and were enthusiastic participants in the discussions.

Unfortunately this was at the end of the year, so I did not have time to kindle the beginning “fire”. I then decided in my fifth year to see if the integrated approach I was using, combined with Literature Circles, and improved attitudes toward reading as well as reading ability. I also decided to systematically document reading behaviours and abilities of the students.

3.1.1 Literature Circles

A complete description of Literature Circles as well as the rationale behind them can be found in Chapter Two. However, I feel that an explanation of how they worked in the classroom is necessary to give a better picture of the structure of the class.

At the beginning of the year, we completed two rounds of Literature Circles using the same book for the whole class. In the first round, I set up the discussion groups with 5 students in each, I set the schedule of when they were to meet and was a part of all groups, I set the number of pages to be read, which was the same for all groups. This was done in order to do plenty of modelling and instruction as to the expectations and workings of Literature Circles. This modelling and discussion took place at

regular intervals throughout the year but was a big part of the curriculum at the beginning. Students need to be “walked through” how to have a discussion, how to stay focused, how to prepare for the discussion, etc. All of these pieces and many more were the focus of the first round of literature circles. The book we used was *Bunnicula* by Deborah and James Howe. I chose this book because it is easy to read, fairly short and I know kids really enjoy it. This round of Literature Circles lasted for 3 weeks.

For the second round, I used the book *Shiloh* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. I allowed students to choose their own discussion groups but kept the number at not more than 6 in a group, making alterations if necessary. This book was chosen because there are many moral dilemmas that lend themselves well to discussions. Again, I set up the discussion schedule so that I would make sure I was still a part of these discussions, but started to hold back more. The students were allowed to decide on the number of pages to read between each discussion. The discussions were held twice a week.

One of the first changes I noticed was the enthusiasm in the discussions and then for the book itself. I had taught this book in the previous year as a ‘whole class’ novel, and found that students liked it, but were not all

that excited about it. However, heated arguments broke out as to whether or not Marty was right in hiding the dog from his owner and if it was considered stealing. This kind of discussion led to more of an interest in the book because students wanted to see what happened and 'who was right'. We continued to do modelling and instruction around discussions and response to literature in this unit. This unit also lasted for three weeks.

At the end of the book, the groups were asked to come up with a project that would highlight the book and show others about the book. We, as a class, talked about various ideas, but in general, students were left on their own to come up with a project. This shocked a lot of them and many found the lack of direction difficult at the beginning. Again, the fear of 'getting it wrong' was a hindrance. Eventually groups worked out ideas and they were given time to work on the projects in class. The amount of creativity was surprising, and it only accelerated as the year went on. One of the more creative groups made a *Shiloh* CD, complete with lyrics. I was continually amazed by what students could come up with if given the freedom – along with a little constructive guidance of course.

For the third unit, I chose 6 novels, all on the theme of 'Courageous Kids'. I did a short 'book talk' on each and then throughout the course of the

period, students looked over the books and filled out a form listing their first three choices. I used these forms to put the students into groups, again with not more than 6 in a group. I tried to give students their first choice, but of course it was impossible for everyone to get their top choice. There was always great anticipation on the day that the new groups were announced.

By this time, most students managed well in the discussion groups. I continued to participate, but only if things needed a push every now and then. I left it up to the students to keep each other on track. Generally, each group chose a leader of the group who was in charge of making sure everyone was prepared, keeping the flow of the conversation going, making sure everyone had a chance to participate and keeping the conversation on the right track. Some deviation was inevitable and added to the discussion, but it was up to the leader to decide how far was too far. The groups continued to choose the number of pages they were to read and this time, it was also up to the group when and how often they met. The minimum requirement was twice a week, but some groups found it helpful to meet each day. I had a schedule on which the groups signed up so that I knew when each group was meeting.

The school had a policy that no Arabic was to be spoken in English classes. I felt that this was unnecessary. At times, especially in a discussion group when a student was having difficulty getting his point across, it was actually important that he spoke in Arabic to enable the group to understand his meaning. Usually someone repeated it in English, or helped to clarify in English anyway. I felt that the monitoring of “only English” was a not a very good use of time or energy.

Literature Circles continued throughout the year and units of study were built around them. We used Literature Circles with non-fiction books as well, but neither the students, nor I, felt that this was as successful. We did it again with biographies, which went better. Each student completed 10 novels in Literature Circles. At the end of each book, the groups continued to find new and creative ways to present the novel to the rest of the class. These ranged from Monopoly games based on a book to video documentaries covering “A Day in the Life of ...” one of the characters of a book.

3.1.2 Classroom structure

The class period was 100 minutes long. A typical class period had the following structure:

9:00 – 9:10: Silent reading

9:10 – 9:30: Focus Lesson

9:30 – 10:30: Students chose to work on a variety of assignments.

These generally included:

- Literature circle discussions
- Reading of literature circle novel
- Reading conference with the teacher
- Response journal
- Research
- Poetry
- Independent reading
- Writing projects

10:30 – 10:40: Wrap up and read aloud

I will explain each piece of the schedule in detail:

- 1) Silent reading – As the students entered the classroom, the first thing they did was sit down and begin to read the book they had chosen from the classroom library. Over the years, I had built up quite an extensive classroom library. I was able to do this largely because I did not need to order the consumable workbooks for the basal programme each year and was able to use this part of the budget on classroom library books. By the time I left the school, I had a classroom library of over 1,500 books. The books ranged in

reading level from Grade 2 to Grade 12. There was no restriction on who could read what books. I did keep track of genre and would encourage students to broaden their reading. The students had a book with them each day because their homework for the year was to read for at least 20 minutes each night. (The discussion of the value of free and extensive reading is found in Chapter Two.) I read during this time as well, which was important for the students to see. I would join in their book discussions and often give a 'book talk' on a book I had read. Often students wrote reviews to put up on the wall near the library and I added a review each week as well.

- 2) Focus lesson – During this time, I would 'teach'. I usually planned the lessons for the week and they were generally about a grammatical concept to be used in the week's writing projects, how to do research, a spelling concept, reading strategies, etc. Often students would request a topic for a focus lesson, or I would decide based on what came out of reading conferences and interviews with students. At times I would have the students present these lessons.
- 3) Work time – For this hour, students would choose what they needed to work on. At the front of the classroom, there was a large calendar with due dates and deadlines, so it was up to them

to structure their time so assignments were finished on time. Some students needed more help with this than others. After the focus lesson, I would quickly take a 'status of the class' where students told me what they were going to be working on. This helped me monitor who needed prompting to get things finished. For example, if a student had chosen independent reading four days in a row, I could be relatively certain his other work was not being completed. Following is a brief explanation of the choices during this time:

- a) Literature Circle discussions – The meetings of the groups for Literature Circles were held during this time. Also, students could choose to do the reading for their next meeting. They could decide as a group to read together, they could do paired reading, or read on their own.
- b) Reading conferences – During this time, I held reading conferences with students. This is when I conducted the interviews and did assessments. I tried to fit in at least three students per period, but with Literature Circle discussions, this was sometimes difficult. As I stayed out of the discussions completely, it was easier to fit in more students.

- c) Response Journal – Each student kept a response journal to go with his or her literature circle novel. It was in this journal that they recorded words they didn't understand or parts of the book that confused them. Each student brought his/her response journal to the discussion groups and this helped to maintain the flow of discussions, and helped students to understand the reading better. The students had 2 entries, which were collected each week. These were various types of response to the literature and were covered in the focus lessons.
- d) Research – Students completed one major research project per term (3 per year) as well as various smaller projects. Again, these were covered in the focus lessons.
- e) Poetry – Every two weeks, students were introduced to a new type of poetry and throughout the weeks, they were asked to complete various assignments and projects relating to the poetry.
- f) Independent reading – If students were caught up with everything that had to be done, they would often choose to read their classroom library book. There were cushions in the reading corner so this was a highly sought after place.

g) Writing projects – Students were working on various writing projects as well during this time. These included creative writing, formal (instructional) writing and journal writing.

4) Wrap up and read aloud – At the end of each period, usually for the last five minutes, I read aloud to the students. The benefits of reading aloud to children are discussed in Chapter Two. The book I read usually followed the same theme as the Literature Circle unit at the time.

4. Data Collection

At both Bahrain Bayan School and Mountain Road Primary School, research was conducted primarily using the survey method, employing various types of questionnaires. The data gathered was quantitative. The questionnaires were formulated with the research questions in mind.

The research covered two general areas:

- a) affective factors – attitudes about reading, motivation to read and self-perception of reading ability;
- b) reading ability – reading fluency and accuracy, comprehension and strategies employed in the reading process. In Bahrain,

these instruments also provided information regarding student progress and growth in reading proficiency.

4.1 Affective factors

Teachers have long recognised that motivation is at the heart of many of the problems faced in teaching children to read. In a study conducted by Veenman (1984), teachers ranked motivating students as one of their primary and overriding concerns. In the questionnaire distributed to teachers at Bayan School as well as information gathered in informal interviews with teachers in Cape Town, motivation was also noted as a significant problem in reading in both English and Arabic.

Winne (1985) describes the "ideal reader" as one who feels competent and perceives reading as being of personal value and primary importance. Within this theoretical framework, reading motivation is defined by an individual's self-concept as a reader and the value that individual places on reading. Because of the importance of self-concept and task value to the motivation to read, it is important to have the resources to assess these factors.

4.2 Instruments used to measure affective factors concerning reading, including motivation, attitudes and self-perceptions.

4.2.1 Background Questionnaire

This questionnaire was administered once at the beginning of the study (September – BBS; June – MRPS). The questionnaire consisted of 20 items. The following is a breakdown of the background questionnaire:

- The first five items were open-ended questions to determine home language and language preference;
- Items 6 – 8 asked for a rating from 1 – 10 (1 being lowest, 10 being highest) of students' own fluency in English and the English fluency of parents;
- Items 9 and 10 used semantic scaled-response questions referring to students' perceptions of themselves as students and readers respectively;
- Items 11 and 12 asked students to report on the amount of free time they spent reading as well as how much time their parents read at home;
- Item 13 was an open-ended question about the approximate number of books read in the past month;
- Items 14 and 15 were dichotomous questions followed by open-ended questions. These questions gave an indirect indication of students' familiarity with books and authors;

- In item 16, students were asked to approximate the number of hours they spent reading in comparison to other leisure activities also listed;
- Item 17 asked about the number of books owned by the student to give a determination of the presence of books in the home;
- Items 18 and 19 were general open-ended questions regarding favourite subjects and hobbies;
- Finally, item 20 was an open-ended statement students were to complete with regard to their general feelings toward reading.

The background questionnaire was used to gather a wide range of information regarding general feelings about reading, language and student self-perception of reading abilities. Also, information was gathered concerning influences on English and reading from home.

4.2.2 Motivation to Read Profile

The Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) was developed by Henk and Melnick (1995). This profile combines quantitative and qualitative approaches for assessing motivation. The purpose is to assess reading motivation by evaluating students' self-concept as readers and the value they place on reading.

The MRP consists of two basic instruments: the reading survey and the conversational interview. The reading survey is a self-report that is group administered and the conversational interview is administered individually. The survey is administered prior to the interview.

a) Reading Survey

This instrument consists of 20 items and uses a four-point semantic-scaled response. The survey assesses two specific dimensions of reading motivation: self-concept as a reader (10 items) and the value placed on reading (10 items). The items that focus on self-concept are designed to elicit information about students' self-perceived competencies in reading and self-perception of their performance as a reader in relation to their peers. The value of reading items are designed to provide information regarding the value students place on reading tasks and activities, particularly in terms of frequency of engagement in reading-related activities.

To administer the survey, I read the questions aloud to the students and gave any explanations that seemed necessary. This helped to ensure that all students were able to ask questions before answering and that poor readers were able to understand the questions being asked.

b) Conversational Interview

The conversational interview is made up of three sections:

- Motivational factors relating to the reading of narrative text (3 questions);
- Information about informational reading (3 questions);
- More general factors related to reading motivation (8 questions)

The primary purpose of the interview is to generate information that will provide insights into students' reading experiences.

The MRP was administered in September and again in June at BBS and once in June at MRPS.

4.2.3 Reader Self Perception Scale

The Reader Self Perception Scale (RSPS) is a quantitative data collection instrument that measures how students feel about themselves as readers. The RSPS is based on Bandura's (1977, 1982) theory of perceived self-efficacy. Bandura defines self-efficacy as a person's judgements of his/her ability to perform an activity and the effect this perception has on

the ongoing future conduct of the activity. In other words, self-perceptions are likely to either motivate or inhibit learning. (Schunk 1982; Zimmerman and Ringle 1981)

The basic self-efficacy model (Bandura 1982; Schunk 1984) predicts that individuals take into account four basic factors when estimating their capabilities as readers:

- a) Progress – how one's perception of present reading performance compares with past performance
- b) Observation Comparison – how a child perceives his/her reading performance to compare with the performance of classmates
- c) Social Feedback – direct or indirect input about reading from teachers, classmates and family
- d) Physiological States – internal feelings that the child experiences during reading

The RSPS consists of one general item and 32 additional items that represent the four scales (Progress – 9 items; Observational Comparison – 6 items; Social Feedback – 9 items; Physiological States – 8 items). The general item at the beginning is used to prompt students to think about their reading ability. The remaining items deal with overall reading ability

as well as aspects of word recognition, word analysis, fluency and comprehension.

In the RSPS, a 5-point Likert-type scale response is used. Students are asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with each statement. (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=undecided; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree)

The RSPS was administered in early October and again in June at BBS and once in June at MRPS. As with the MRP, I read the questions aloud to students, clarifying as necessary.

4.3 Assessment of Reading Ability

Assessment, especially in the area of reading development, can be a contentious issue. To ascertain whether or not students are learning to read for meaning is difficult and requires a great deal of knowledge about the reading process, behaviours of effective and ineffective readers and literacy development.

The shift from seeing reading as a word recognition skill to a meaning-making process results largely from Ken Goodman's report on miscue analysis. (1964) This meaning-making process, now commonly called 'the

reading process' is generally seen as essential knowledge for successfully teaching and assessing reading. The reading process provides an explanation of "how reading happens". (Cambourne 1988) To construct meaning from text, readers use the language information available to them. This available language system consists of sounds and symbols (graphophonic cues), language structure or grammar (syntactic cues) and knowledge – both that found in the text and that in the readers background experience (semantic cues). As readers interact with print, they access and process the language cues through making and confirming predictions. These predictions are constantly being checked to see if they make sense, which then leads to a meaningful interpretation of the text. Effective readers use these language cues interdependently. (Cambourne 1988; Y. Goodman 1996)

When assessing readers, teachers use this knowledge of "how reading happens" to make observations about how well readers use strategies and knowledge of cueing systems. The more control readers have over the reading process, the more they control their own construction of meaning. (Cambourne 1988)

In addition to assessing whether or not students are developing behaviours of effective readers, it is also important to assess attributes

such as confidence, risk-taking, connecting personally with the text, extended engagement with a text, retelling, the ability to choose books, attitudes toward reading, etc. These attributes cannot be assessed by standardised testing methods. However, they are essential attributes to the development of readers, so teachers must have resources available for assessment of these attributes.

Because of individual differences, it is always risky to associate specific developmental expectations with specific ages or grade levels. This is especially true for second language English learners. However, there are patterns of growth in literacy development. Hill and Ruptic (1994), in their continuum of reading development, note that readers progress toward greater competence as they move from reading and retelling highly predictable stories to reading less predictable stories silently and as they independently apply reading strategies to construct meaning with complex text that is unfamiliar.

Certain practices are necessary to help teachers observe readers, such as anecdotal notes, conferences, interviews, surveys, miscue analysis and retelling. These are used to track a reader's developing ability to comprehend and discuss text confidently. These also help to determine what is difficult for the reader and what strategies are being used. One

criticism of alternative assessments is that they are subjective and give imprecise bits of information. However, by nature, they allow for inquiry into the reader's literacy knowledge and provide ongoing information about a reader's growth over time. (Crofton 1994; Yoshioka 1997)

It is for these reasons that content-based authentic forms of assessment were used as the basis for data collection. These assessments allowed for growth to be observed throughout the course of the school year in Bahrain and gave an indication of a starting point for learners at MRPS. The data was used for comparative analysis rather than to indicate growth at Mountain Road Primary.

4.3.1 Reading Ladders

"A list of books that represents a gradient of difficulty that a child has read over time displays a visual record of each child's reading growth." (M. Clay 1993) Reading ladders are used to determine comfort or fluency level in reading as well as show growth in that fluency level over time. This system is composed of 12 reading samples, ranging in reading level from Grade 1 to 12, each approximately 100 words in length. The objective is to find the most challenging level students can read comfortably with at least 95% accuracy. Students begin with the first level and read aloud through the levels. After the first assessment, the student starts from

their fluency level, which saves time. The teacher keeps track of miscues and when the student cannot make it through the excerpt with less than 5 mistakes, the previous level is considered to be their 'comfort level'. It is quite easy to hear in a student's oral reading when they have passed their comfort level. Reading ladders were conducted three times during the year – September, January and June – in Bahrain and in June at MRPS.

4.3.2 Miscue Analysis

Miscue analysis is a practical diagnostic assessment technique. It is used to reveal the strategies students use when they read as well as the knowledge students have about language. This then shows the degree to which readers use graphophonic (including phonics), syntactic and semantic language systems. Over time, the pattern of miscues reveals readers' linguistic and cognitive strengths as well as those needing support. In analysing miscues, it is usually observed that the oral miscues of skilled readers are semantically and syntactically appropriate, whereas the miscues of less-skilled readers do not show the same appropriateness.

There are some questions about the use of miscue analysis as a reading assessment tool. The main consideration is that reading aloud impedes reading comprehension, as comprehension is a silent reading process that may be qualitatively different from reading aloud. (Bernhardt 1986)

Because of this consideration, I did not rely heavily on miscue analysis for information regarding reading comprehension, but rather as an indication of reading fluency and an analysis of errors during oral reading.

At BBS, I conducted miscue analyses three times during the school year – October, February and June and at MRPS, I conducted this assessment in June. I used a 'ready-made' package from the *PM Benchmark* series (Nelson Publishing 2000), which I found easy to use and informative. I used the sample that was at the Grade 5 level. In addition to miscue analysis, this form also included an analysis of retelling.

4.3.3 Metacomprehension Strategy Index

Good readers are actively involved in the comprehension process. They select and use appropriate strategies and monitor their comprehension as they read to help them understand and remember information. Because it has been shown that awareness of metacomprehension strategies is characteristic of good comprehenders (Paris and Jacobs 1984; Schmitt 1988), it is useful for teachers to be able to evaluate their students' awareness of those strategies.

The Metacomprehension Strategy Index (MSI) is an instrument that teachers can use to evaluate middle to upper primary students' knowledge

of strategic reading processes. The MSI is a 25-item, 4-option multiple-choice questionnaire that asks students about the strategies they could use before, during and after reading a narrative selection. The MSI assesses students' awareness of a variety of metacomprehension behaviours that fit into six broad categories: a) predicting and verifying; b) previewing; c) purpose setting; d) self-questioning; e) drawing from background knowledge; f) summarising and applying fix-up strategies.

The MSI was administered in October and again in June at BBS and in June at MRPS. I read the questions and possible answers aloud to the students.

4.3.4 Developmental Reading Continuums

The reading continuum was developed by Hill and Ruptic (1994). This continuum is used to show reading growth from pre-reading through fluency. In Bahrain, I used information gathered from structured observations and the assessments described above to complete the continuums. These were completed once each term – early November, late March and early June – with each term highlighted in a different colour so at the end of the year, it was easy to see where the student had begun and the progress they made throughout the year. These

continuums were also extremely helpful when discussing reading growth with parents.

Because of the difference in my role at MRPS, I did not employ this instrument of data collection. The continuums were, however, introduced to the faculty through staff development seminars. Many teachers are using the continuums informally to track student progress. The continuums are presently being reworked to align more closely with the (2002) Revised South African National Curriculum and will become part of the reading assessment process within the 2005 – 2006 academic year at Mountain Road Primary School.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the setting and participants in the study; the methodology used as well as the support of that methodology, the instructional method used in the classroom, highlighting Literature Circles; and the methods of data collection. In the following chapter, I will analyse and report on the results of the data collection process.

Chapter Four

Results of Data Collection

1.1. Introductory Remarks

In this chapter, the results of the data collection process are presented.

This presentation will begin with the background questionnaire. This questionnaire covers numerous areas, such as student language, reader self-perceptions, amount of time spent reading and influence of reading in the home. The results of the Motivation to Read Profile and the Reader Self Perception Survey will be recorded and discussed in the context of affective factors affecting reading motivation.

In the area of reading achievement, the scores of the Metacomprehension Strategy Index will be discussed as well as grade level equivalents of reading abilities in the framework of comfort and instructional levels.

1.2 Key Questions

Several key questions inform this chapter:

- Is motivation a significant factor in determining reading proficiency and overall levels of literacy in students learning English as a second additional language?

- Does enhanced motivation as set up by the use of Literature Circles and their associated operations and practices, improve reading proficiency and overall levels of literacy?

A question also considered in this chapter is:

- Does the researcher's role in the classroom affect the students' perceived need to give the "correct" answer and does this affect the data collection process? Also included in this discussion is the self-reporting "lie-factor" that must be taken into account.

2. Background questionnaire

The first instrument of data collection used was the background questionnaire. (See Appendix A)

2.1. Home language

Open-ended question: *The language I speak most often at home is*

_____.

Bahrain Bayan School	
Arabic	77%
Persian	14%
English	18%
Urdu	1%

Mountain Road Primary School	
English	56%
Xhosa	38%
Afrikaans	6%

It should be noted that these results of home language were self-reports.

One downfall with self-reporting is the inaccuracies caused by the 'lie factor'. In general, it seemed that the Xhosa students were clear and open about the fact that they spoke Xhosa at home and outside of school with friends. However, students speaking Afrikaans were reluctant to report the fact that they spoke Afrikaans at home or outside of school with friends. Various other information gathered by the school for general purposes indicates a much larger percentage of students coming from homes with Afrikaans as a first language.

There is no foolproof method to find accurate numbers for this section. It is interesting to consider reasons for this 'lie-factor' among the Afrikaans students.

This was also prevalent at Bahrain Bayan School. A definite hierarchy of languages existed, with English being at the top – and especially English

with an American accent. I feel that the media have a lot to do with this perception.

Since the majority of students were Bahraini nationals, chances of the American accent were unrealistic. Next in the hierarchy was Arabic, but only Arabic with the Bahraini dialect. Students who spoke Egyptian, Jordanian or Saudi Arabic were often ridiculed. Lower than the other dialects of Arabic was Persian. This affected the number of students who reported Persian as being their home language. As with the Afrikaans-speaking students at Mountain Road, many more students spoke Persian or languages other than Bahraini Arabic at home than indicated that fact on the questionnaire.

2.2 English fluency

The next three questions dealt with self-perceived fluency in English. Students were asked to rate themselves and their parents on a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being lowest, 10 being highest) with regard to fluency in English. I have reported the results of student self-perceived fluency only.

	Bahrain Bayan School	Mountain Road Primary School
Average scores	7.2	9.4

2.3

Rating of self as a student

Semantic scaled-response to determine self-perception as students. *I*

think I am... a very good student; a good student; an OK student; a poor student.

Bahrain Bayan School	
Very good	26%
Good	24%
OK	38%
Poor	12%

Mountain Road Primary School	
Very good	39%
Good	35%
OK	20%
Poor	6%

These questions were an important lead-in to the next question that dealt specifically with student perception of themselves as readers. Most students who rated themselves at a 9 or above in English fluency also rated themselves either a good or very good reader. Similarly, most students who felt they were at an 8 or below in fluency rated themselves as an OK or poor reader.

2.4

Rating of self as a reader

Semantic scaled-response: *I think I am ... a very good reader; a good reader; an OK reader; a poor reader.*

	BBS	
	Beginning of school year	End of school year
Very good reader	23%	42%
Good reader	30%	41%
OK reader	36%	17%
Poor reader	11%	0%

MRPS
36%
32%
32%
0%

- 2.5 Amount of reading done in free time by students. Multiple-choice question: *At home, in my free time, I read... Most of the time; Some of the time; Almost never; Never.*

	BBS		MRPS
	Beginning of school year	End of school year	
Most of the time	16%	40%	20%
Some of the time	33%	48%	50%
Almost never	36%	12%	18%
Never	15%	0%	12%

- 2.6 Free time spent reading by parents

Item 12 asked students to reflect on the amount of reading done by their parents in their free time. This was also a multiple-choice question: *My parents read... Most of the time; some of the time; almost never; never.*

	BBS	MRPS
Most of the time	31%	10%
Some of the time	46%	12%
Almost never	20%	56%
Never	3%	22%

As mentioned in Chapter Two, children who come from an environment where they are exposed to literacy have an advantage over children who do not. One of the most important areas of influence is on children's attitudes towards reading and literacy in general. If reading is viewed as

important in the home and parents model this view, children are more likely to adopt the notion that reading is important.

2.7 Books owned by students

Although this is question 17 on the questionnaire, I feel it relates to the previous section, so I will add the results out of sequence. This was an open-ended question asking students to state the number of books they personally own. *Approximately how many books do you own?*

	BBS	MRPS
Average number of books	50	9

2.8 Estimate of the number of books read in the past month. Open-ended question: *How many books do you think you have read in the last month?*

	BBS		MRPS
	Beginning of school year	End of school year	
Class Average	5	14	6

2.9 Knowledge of a favourite book.

These were dichotomous followed by open-ended questions. *Do you have a favourite book? If so, what is the title?*

	BBS		MRPS
	Beginning of school year	End of school year	
Yes	74%	100%	82%
No	26%	0%	18%

3. Motivation to Read Profile

The second instrument used for data collection was the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP). (See Appendix B) As discussed in Chapter Three, this instrument is used to determine students' self-concept as a reader as well as the value they place on reading. Scores are reported by class averages (out of 100 points possible) in the two categories.

	BBS		<u>MRPS</u>
	Beginning of school year	End of school year	
Self Concept	70.66	88.63	73.88
Value of reading	71.53	91.46	77.27

In observing the results of the MRP, it is again important to keep in mind the desire of many students to give the 'right' answer. The answers they give often pertain to what they think they 'should' do, not necessarily what is actually done when reading. As stated earlier, it is difficult to ascertain unbiased scores because of this factor. However, following up the survey with the conversational interview did help to justify some answers that were given.

The conversational interview was administered as a follow-up to the survey, but these results are not reported. The results were mainly for clarification and did not generate an entirely new body of data.

4. The Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS)

The RSPS was the third instrument administered for data collection. (See Appendix C) There are 4 factors measured by this tool: Performance (past success, amount of effort necessary, need of assistance, patterns of progress, etc.); Observational Comparison; Social Feedback; and Physiological States. There is, of course, natural overlap between the categories.

In scoring this instrument, the answers are compiled by category, which then lead to a 'high', 'average' or 'low' score in each. A 'high' score indicates perceived competence or positive feeling in that category. In contrast, a 'low' score indicates perceived incompetence, difficulty or unease.

Bahrain Bayan School			
	High	Average	Low
Performance	21%	59%	20%
Observational Comparison	16%	63%	11%
Social Feedback	20%	55%	25%
Physiological States	37%	52%	11%

Mountain Road Primary School			
	High	Average	Low
Performance	30%	58%	12%
Observational Comparison	21%	70%	9%
Social Feedback	39%	45%	6%
Physiological States	45%	36%	9%

As mentioned in Chapter Three, this instrument measures not only how students feel about reading and their own reading abilities, but also their perceptions from those around them. Teachers have an extremely significant effect on student self-perception and this is taken into account with this survey.

5. **Metacomprehension Strategy Index (MSI)**

The MSI (See Appendix D) consists of 6 areas in which knowledge of comprehension strategies used before, during and after reading a narrative is measured. These areas are: predicting and verifying; previewing; purpose setting; self questioning; drawing from background knowledge and summarising and applying fix-up strategies. Although in compiling the data from the MSI I kept the categories separate, in reporting the results, I will give an all-inclusive percentage. This percentage indicates the number of "correct" answers given. A correct answer shows knowledge of the strategy to be used for the situation given on the questionnaire.

	BBS	
	Beginning of school year	End of school year
Overall percentage of "correct" responses	24.36%	42.28%

MRPS
23.52%

It should be noted that, in both schools, students found the MSI to be confusing. However, it does give an indication of improvement in the understanding of comprehension strategies if nothing else. Because of this, I have elected to include the results while keeping in mind the shortcomings of the instrument.

Further details of the findings of the MSI will be discussed in Chapter Five.

6. Assessment of reading ability and grade level equivalent.

6.1 Reading Accuracy and Fluency

The percentage rate for reading accuracy and fluency was comprised by administering a running record. The text for the assessment was a narrative at the 5th grade level. The score is the average accuracy rate achieved on the running record. The accuracy rate is calculated using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Words correct}}{\text{Words possible}}$$

	BBS		MRPS
	Beginning of school year	End of school year	
Average Accuracy Rate	89.82%	95.82%	91.03%

6.2 Comprehension

This level was determined from five questions that followed an oral reading done by the student. Again, the text was a narrative at the 5th grade level.

	BBS	
	Beginning of school year	End of school year
Average out of 5 possible points	2.15	3.77

MRPS
2

6.3 Reading Frustration Level

This reading level was ascertained from the same oral reading used to assess comprehension level. This level is based on a combination of reading fluency and accuracy as well as comprehension. There are three levels: Easy (95 – 100%); Instructional (90 – 94%); Hard (89% and below). The scores represent the percentage of students at each level.

	BBS	
	Beginning of school year	End of school year
Easy	23%	62%
Instructional	46%	27%
Hard	31%	11%

MRPS
22%
53%
25%

6.4. Grade Level Equivalent of Reading Level (Comfort Level)

Reading ladders were used to determine students' grade level equivalent for reading ability. The results are given as a percentage of the number of students at each respective grade level.

	BBS		MRPS
	Beginning of school year	End of school year	
Grade One level	3%	0%	3%
Grade Two level	14%	0%	9%
Grade Three level	31%	14%	16%
Grade Four level	22%	25%	47%
Grade Five level	11%	20%	9%
Above Grade Five level	19%	41%	16%

7. Conclusion

In this chapter, the results of the data collection process were reported. Tables were used to show the comparisons between Bahrain Bayan School and Mountain Road Primary School. These comparisons will be analysed further in the following chapter.

As discussed in the first section of the chapter, all of the data is subject to the 'lie-factor'. Many students give what they see as being the right answer or the answer that they feel is close to what is expected of them. There is no way around this obstacle, but it is important to note the presence. The implications of this factor will be discussed with the interpretations of these results in Chapter Five.

The results of the data given in this chapter point towards Literature Circles as a successful approach to increase student motivation to read. This, in turn, improves reading proficiency. As student attitudes towards reading became more positive, students were motivated to do the amount of reading necessary to raise reading levels. Also, as reading proficiency improved, student self-perception of reading ability improved.

As shown in the Literature Review and the results of the data collected, students must want to read and the reading must be relevant to their lives. By employing Literature Circles in the classroom, students are given the tools to improve reading ability while increasing the motivation to read for pleasure.

In looking at the comparison, it is obvious that the students at MRPS need a way to help increase reading proficiency. With the added obstacles of lack of adequate and appropriate resources, both at school and at home, the task is even greater to make reading accessible and enjoyable. With competition from television, computer games and video games, teachers must have strategies available to make reading 'come alive' for students.

Chapter Five

Interpretation and Discussion of Data Collection

1. Introduction

This chapter serves to describe and interpret the data reported in Chapter Four. This data analysis has involved shifting between different models of data collection: analysis, reformulation of research questions and re-examination of the theories of literacy. The data was collected both quantitatively and qualitatively. Throughout data collection, I analysed observations, interviews, assessments, questionnaires and surveys.

In Bahrain, over the course of one school year, I recorded classroom observations of students in order to track progress in reading skills as well as to determine changes in motivation to read. I also made use of questionnaires and surveys, as described in Chapters Three and Four. Because of the amount of time I had with these children in the classroom, I was able to conduct more interviews with students both formally and informally. This process was helpful in gathering information, especially with regard to motivation as this is a difficult area to assess by means of questionnaires only. The data collection was done one-on-one with students, in small groups and with the class as a whole group.

At Mountain Road Primary School, I was not able to spend as much time with students, not did I have the length of time to monitor changes in attitudes. Almost all of the data gathered was done by means of interviews, questionnaires and assessments. Unfortunately, the 'lie-factor' discussed in Chapter Four plays a larger role, as I was not able to track student progress and see students on a daily basis. Most of the data collection was done either with the class as a whole group or by taking students out of class in a 1:1 situation, as with the interviews and assessments.

The chapter will be divided into categories according to data collection type. Various interpretations of the results will be provided and correlations made.

1.1. Background Questionnaire

1.2. Home Language

It is obvious that the number of students with English as a first language is higher at Mountain Road Primary School than at Bahrain Bayan School – 38% higher. Again, it is important to remember the influences on the accuracy of these numbers. Also, it is important to keep in mind that Mountain Road Primary School is a school with English as the language of learning and teaching whereas Bahrain Bayan School has both English and

Arabic as languages of teaching and learning. This is important to mention, as I did not find the reading scores to be significantly higher from Mountain Road Primary School. This might have been expected in a school where students spend the entire day exposed to an English curriculum rather than for only part of the day, as is the case at BBS. This fact did not seem to significantly affect reading ability, but at MRPS, students' self-perception as readers was more positive. It is one observation that perhaps it is not the overall language medium of the school that affects reading ability or self-perceived ability, but rather the way in which reading itself is approached by the teacher, the school and in the curriculum.

At BBS, there was tremendous focus on reading. Students were very aware of their own abilities with regard to reading. This was partially because of the continuous evaluation in all areas of reading, but also because students were involved in the assessment process. Students completed self-evaluations on a regular basis and kept track of their own progress. This is an important factor, as students who are involved in the assessment process take more control of their own learning.

At Mountain Road Primary School, one reading assessment was conducted during the school year, which was the *Schonell* Reading Age assessment.

Students were not made aware of the results of this test, as these were just recorded in their files from year to year. In Grades 1 – 2, students 'worked through' a reading series such as *Janet and John* or *Kathy and Mark*, but there was no type of assessment other than knowledge of words in the readers.

2.2 Self-perception of English fluency

It is not surprising that the average score in this category at MRPS was higher than that of BBS. 38% more of the students at MRPS were first language English learners and students were exposed to English for the full school day as opposed to only part of the day as at BBS. At Mountain Road Primary, the school day was 6 ½ hours and at BBS, the school day was 7 hours and 15 minutes, with English comprising approximately 3.5 hours as the language of learning and teaching. So, at MRPS, students were exposed to English almost twice the amount of time as at BBS.

Another factor to consider is that at BBS, most students were exposed to English at school only. Being a 99% Arabic population, it was not necessary to use English outside of school very frequently. However, the population in Cape Town is much more diverse and students are more likely to converse in languages other than their home language throughout the course of the day outside of school.

Most students understood the question of fluency as pertaining to spoken English as this is the most obvious.

2.3 Self-perception of overall academic and reading ability

It is interesting to look at the similarities in the results of questions 9 and 10, concerning self-perception of general academic ability and reading ability respectively. 74% of the students at MRPS rated themselves as good to very good students as opposed to 50% of the students at BBS. Then, on question 10 pertaining to reading ability, 70% of the students at MRPS rated themselves as good to very good readers, which is 17% higher than the number of students at BBS at the beginning of the year. This is significant to mention in light of the similarities of scores in reading ability, as will be shown in the sections concerning reading achievement.

There was a strong correlation between students ranking themselves as good to very good students and good to very good readers in both schools. At BBS, 86% of the students rating themselves as good to very good students also rated themselves as good to very good readers. Similarly, 96% of the students rating themselves as poor students also rated themselves as poor readers. This would seem to highlight the fact

that reading ability – and the self-perception thereof – significantly affects overall academic ability and the self-perception of this ability.

Students' self-perception of their own reading ability is important to the teaching of reading and the motivation to read. It is interesting to note that at MRPS, 0% of the students rated themselves as poor readers, although 28% of these students tested at below the Grade Three reading level. At BBS, 11% of the students rated themselves as poor readers at the beginning of the school year. 48% of these students tested at below the Grade Three reading level.

One explanation of the 0% rating of MRPS students is in terms of assessment. At MRPS, literacy is a general subject, with reading making up a small part of that subject. Therefore, a student could be a poor reader, but do well in spelling, grammar, etc. and receive a high grade for literacy. This would more than likely cause a student to consider him/herself a good reader. There is not much focus on reading as a separate skill. At BBS, a student's "language arts" grade is made up of four parts – reading, writing, listening and speaking – each receiving equal weighting and a separate assessment. The students had more feedback about their reading skills, which led to more realistic self-perceptions of reading ability. Also, throughout the year of the study at

BBS, tremendous emphasis was placed on reading, so it is not surprising that scores increased in all areas.

As mentioned in the previous section, students at BBS were much more involved in the assessment process and understood what it meant to be a 'good' reader or a 'poor' reader. This was not the case at MRPS. Again, because of the use of reading groups in the lower grades, it was much more evident to students who the good readers and poor readers were. However, as the amount of reading in class decreased, the amount of feedback and assessment decreased as well.

At MRPS, students are not generally encouraged to do a lot of external reading or to read for pleasure. Students are taken to the library once or twice a week, but this is to complete work given by the teacher using reference materials. In Grades 1 – 3, students go to the library for the sole purpose of taking out books. There is still a general enthusiasm for the library and the books – if the teacher promotes this encouragement. By Grade 4, students can go to the library after school to check out books if they wish to. Only 23% of the students regularly make use of this opportunity. This is not because of lack of resources. Books are continuously being added to the library, either through donations, sales or fundraisers. It is the case that reading, especially for pleasure, is not

treated as a priority. As more focus moves to reading at Mountain Road, it is hoped that changes will occur in students, and more importantly in teachers, with regard to reading instruction and reading for pleasure.

Other speculation about the higher self-perception at MRPS has to do with the fact that the parental pressure to achieve at BBS was great.

Standards for students, set by parents, teachers and the curriculum, were extremely high – too high in many cases. This often led to a lower sense of achievement in students at BBS. This pressure to achieve also led to a decrease in motivation as students were not being given the means to reach the high expectations, so many of the students gave up. A constant complaint from teachers at BBS was the lack of motivation from students. I feel that standards set too high with no means of reaching them were a significant factor in this lack of motivation.

At MRPS, the standards seem to be more realistic for some students, but often lower for students with English as a second language. Poor English skills due to another home language are often used as an explanation of students' poor achievement. Although MRPS uses English as the language of learning and teaching, too often "Yes, but they are Xhosa-speaking so they are way behind" is heard as an explanation for poor results, especially in the area of reading. This is one explanation certainly, but

there is not enough support in place to help students to attain the level of English skills they will need in the higher grades. Students moving from Grade 7 at MRPS to high school must be prepared with the relevant reading skills they will find necessary to succeed academically. According to a report on bilingual primary education in South Africa, from Grade 1 to Grade 4, the average English vocabulary necessary for students to succeed is 800 words. In Grade 5, students need a core English vocabulary of 5,000 words. This is a 600% increase in the vocabulary necessary to be successful academically. (Macdonald 1991) Students must be given the tools to meet this challenge, which means more focus on reading development and reading for pleasure beyond the Foundation Phase and into the Intermediate Phase.

2.4 Free time spent reading by students and parents

The number of students reporting to spend no free time reading is comparable between MRPS and BBS at the beginning of the year, with only a 3% difference. However, the number of students reporting to read "most of the time" at BBS increased 24% from the beginning to the end of the school year. This, according to previous research stated in Chapter Two, is directly related to higher levels of motivation to read for pleasure.

An important correlation to be made here is the relationship between the amount of free time spent reading and reading ability. Of the 20% of MRPS students who stated that they spent most of their free time reading, 85% scored above the Grade Five reading level. Of the 16% at BBS, 83% of them were above the Grade Five reading level. Also, 90% of these students – at both schools – reported that their parents read a great deal in their free time as well. In contrast, 100% of the students – in both schools – who reported that they either never read or almost never read in their free time scored below the Grade Five reading level, 92% of those scoring at the Grade Three level or below.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the most important indicator of reading ability and reading growth is independent reading. Throughout the year at BBS, students read independently for homework, they read independently during class time, there were many incentives for reading independently. Also, as students did more reading, they could see the improvement in their reading ability, which then affected motivation to read. These students were encouraged to read at their comfort level, which also reduced the frustration level and increased motivation.

When students are beginning to read, teachers are conscious of the level of reading being given to the student. It would be unheard of to give a

beginning reader a book at the 5th Grade level. However, in many 5th Grade classrooms (using MRPS as an example) this is what is happening. Only 22% of the students in Grade Five at MRPS are reading at the Grade Five level, yet they are being expected to cope with material at or beyond that level. These students need to be given a way to 'bridge the gap' that exists between their current reading level and the level expected of them. As described in Chapters Two and Three, the best way to help bridge this gap is through extensive reading at or below the comfort reading level. As indicated by the results after the year of Literature Circles and extensive reading at BBS, student reading proficiency improved, as did the motivation to read.

78% of the students at MRPS reported that their parents either never read or almost never read during free time with only 23% of the students at BBS reporting the same. A possible explanation for this difference – with more students at BBS reporting that their parents read at home – is access to books due to better economic circumstances. Also, again due to the high standards and parental pressure at BBS, more of the parents, especially fathers, may have been seen to be "academic" by their children.

A further correlation to be made is in relation to students' self-perception as readers and reading done by parents. What is especially interesting is

the difference between the two schools in this regard. For this correlation, I am using the data collected from BBS at the beginning of the school year. Of the 47% of students at BBS ranking themselves as OK to poor readers, 74% said their parents read most to some of the time. Of the good to very good readers at BBS, 93% stated that their parents read most of the time. At MRPS, 100% of the self-rated OK to poor readers stated that their parents almost never or never read and 83% of the 68% ranking themselves as good to very good readers stated that their parents read most of the time.

Children who come from homes in which reading is important and have role models for reading in the home have a tremendous advantage over children who do not. According to Carole Bloch, who has done extensive research on literacy in schools in South Africa, many children enter school having encountered little or no print in their pre-school days. Most of these children come from environments and cultures where "reading for pleasure is not the norm, and print is a medium which has little function or meaning in everyday life." (Cape Argus, January 2004)

The amount of reading done by parents in the home has a significant and positive relationship on students' motivation to read outside of school, which in turn has a positive effect on reading ability.

2.5 Number of books owned by students

Again, I feel that economic differences played a major role in the responses. Also, parents in Bahrain seemed more aware of the importance of books in the home for children, as well as being more able to buy these books. There is a difference as well in the availability of books through the schools. At BBS, book fairs were held on the premises at the beginning and the end of the school year, and four times during the year, students had the opportunity to order books from a UK-based book club. At MRPS, there is no such opportunity. Many students at the school do not come from a culture of reading, so to spend money on books is not a priority.

2.6 Number of books read

There is not a significant difference between the number of books reportedly read by students at BBS at the beginning of the school year and the students at MRPS. However, the average number reported by students at MRPS is quite inflated in my estimation. After observation of the students, very few of them would have read an average of two books per month, much less six. The same would be true for many students at BBS before novels were incorporated into the curriculum.

Of course, due to the emphasis on Literature Circles and reading as homework, the number of books read by students at BBS more than doubled by the end of the year. If one were to project this throughout the school year, students following this type of programme such as the one implemented at BBS would be reading approximately 140 books per school year!

2.7 Knowledge of a favourite book / author

There are numerous reasons for including this item on the questionnaire. One reason is to gauge the familiarity of the students to books. This question actually gives a better indication of the amount of reading done than asking the question "*How many books have you read in the last month?*" It seems that often students have the perception of reading more books than they really have. If they can list a favourite book (that is age appropriate and not from a movie) and even more, list a favourite author, this is an indication of a student who is a reader beyond the context of the classroom.

74% of BBS students at the beginning of the year answered "yes" to the question of a favourite book, over half of them listing *Charlotte's Web*, which was the novel read as a class in Grade Four. 82% of the MRPS students answered in the affirmative, but only 3 students were able to

give a specific title that would be considered appropriate. It is interesting that 6 of the students at MRPS listed *Janet and John* as a favourite book. All three of the students able to list a favourite book scored above the Grade Five level for reading. At the end of the school year, 100% of BBS students answered yes to this question, 78% of them listing a book read for Literature Circles.

On the questionnaire, this question was followed by "*Do you have a favourite author? If so, who?*" One student from MRPS was able to name an author and three students from BBS at the beginning of the school year. By the end of the school year, 78% of students at BBS listed a favourite author.

An interesting item to mention is that of the 23% of students at BBS referring to themselves as very good readers at the beginning of the school year, 100% said that they had a favourite book. However, of the 36% in the same category at MRPS, only 3 of these students listed a favourite book.

3 Motivation to Read Profile

3.1 The results in both categories, "self-concept as a reader" and "the value of reading" was comparable for both BBS at the beginning of the school

year and MRPS, with MRPS scoring slightly higher in both categories. It is not surprising, with the emphasis on reading and the amount of actual reading done throughout the course of the year of the study, that the scores at BBS in self concept increased by 17.97% and value of reading by 19.93% by the end of the year.

An interesting observation with regard to the Motivation to Read Profile is the majority of the students scoring 90% or higher in the value of reading category tested at the Fifth Grade reading level and above. 100% of the students scoring above 90% in the category of self-concept were at the Grade Five level and above. This was the case in both schools. This correlation reiterates the importance of motivation to read and reading ability.

4 Reader Self-Perception Scale

- 4.1. The category with the highest percentage of "high" feelings in both schools was physiological states, with 45% of MRPS students and 37% of BBS students falling into the "high" category. A positive result from both schools was the low percentage of students scoring in the "low" area for this category, as a "low" score reflects feelings of anxiousness and uncomfortability when reading. In relation to this, I did feel that BBS

students were more anxious while reading orally for evaluation purposes, but this could have been related to the fact that I was the classroom teacher and ultimately responsible for assessment, whereas at MRPS, I was not the class teacher and had no affect on their assessments.

In all categories, BBS had more students falling into the “low” categories of the RSPS, which is reflected throughout the study at the beginning of the year. This follows in line with other data collection results in which students at BBS scored lower with regard to their perceptions of themselves as readers. As these perceptions changed throughout the school year, students held a more positive view both of themselves as readers and of reading in general.

5 Metacomprehension Strategy Index

- 5.1. I feel that this was the least valuable of all data collection instruments used in the study. It is my opinion that a lot of ‘correct’ answers are left to chance. My reason for this conclusion is that only one student at MRPS and 2 students at BBS (at the beginning of the school year) scored above 50%. Obviously, this does not accurately reflect the comprehension strategies used by many of the students, especially those scoring at the Fifth Grade reading level and above. I felt that the questions were

difficult to understand especially if students had not been taught anything about comprehension strategies.

However, as seen by the 17.92% increase in "correct" answers from BBS students at the end of the school year, this does show that students, if taught, can become more familiar with the comprehension strategies they use. This end result still does not accurately reflect the strategies used by these students as is shown by the reading growth over the course of the year.

One factor of note is that at MRPS, the category with the highest percentage of "correct" answers was in background knowledge, whereas at BBS, this was one of the lowest. I attribute this to the general push in the National Curriculum in South Africa to use literature of South African authors. Obviously, students would have more use of background knowledge if this were the case. As explained previously, most of the literature used at BBS is from the US and UK. Except for movies and some travel experience, students did not have the background knowledge with which to relate to this literature. I saw the most evidence of this when examining poetry used in the two schools. At MRPS, the poets used were 90% South African. At BBS, not one Arabic author or poet was included in any poetry unit through high school.

6. Reading Ability and Progress

6.1. Accuracy Rate

The accuracy rate from MRPS was slightly higher than BBS at the beginning of the year (3.93% higher). However, the comprehension rate at BBS was slightly higher (2.15 out of 5 by BBS; 2 out of 5 from MRPS). This difference may be reflective of the amount of time spent on phonics in the lower grades of the school, which is significantly higher at MRPS. Through observation of classes at MRPS, more emphasis is placed on 'getting the word' than on comprehension. The *Shonell Reading Age Test* is evidence of this fact. In observing the teaching of *I am David* in Grade Seven, most of the 'comprehension' questions involved finding the right sentences in the book to copy as answers.

One difference I found in this area is the amount of teacher training and support. It is much more difficult to teach understanding of the text than to teach accuracy in reading the text. I found that at BBS, with the introduction of novels in the classroom, a lot of teacher training had to be done on how to teach and assess comprehension. This was a major area of focus and a lot of teacher support was offered.

At MRPS, this area is just beginning to receive consideration. With a focus on more books and more reading in the classrooms, it follows that there will be more information and training centred around comprehension. Various workshops have already taken place with regard to comprehension strategies and a focus on reading for meaning. It is, however, too early to see the results of this effort.

It also follows that for students to become better at comprehension, they need to read more and they need to read material at or below their comfort level. If they are reading material that is challenging, there will automatically be more focus on words rather than meaning.

6.2. Reading Frustration Levels

The reading levels at BBS and MRPS were similar, with BBS having a 6% higher number of students placed at the 'hard' level of instruction. With the increased exposure to reading, as well as instruction in phonics and comprehension strategies as needed, the number of BBS students who were placed in the "easy" category went from 25% at the beginning of the year to 62% at the end of the school year. This is a significant increase. However, it is of some concern that 11% of the students continued to find the reading difficult, which means they scored below 89% in reading accuracy and comprehension.

6.3. Grade Level Equivalent (Comfort Level)

The reading ladder assessment is based mainly on accuracy and fluency. Comprehension is not taken into account as heavily as when determining reading level.

At the beginning of the school year at BBS, only 30% of the students were reading at the Grade Five level or above. By the end of the school year, this percentage increased to 61%. This is a significant improvement. Also, at the beginning of the school year, 17% of the students were reading below the Grade Three level. By the end of the school year, all students were reading at at least the Grade Three level and above.

It is interesting to note that 72% of MRPS students were comfortable at a Grade Four accuracy level and above. Again, because accuracy is taken into account more than comprehension, the emphasis on phonics at MRPS may be a contributing factor.

Another interesting aspect of this research is that at MRPS, of the 25% who scored at the Grade Five reading level and above, 100% of them were students with English as a first language. At BBS, all students with

English as a first language scored above the Grade Five level, but there were second language English speakers included as well. Of these second language English students, 90% of them reported either a mother or father with a high level of fluency in English. Therefore, it would stand to reason that more exposure to English both in and out of school helps to improve English reading proficiency and progress in reading.

7. Limitations of the Study

- 7.1. One of the most significant limitations of the study was the 'lie-factor' as discussed in Chapter Four. Students, for various reasons, were not always honest in reporting home language and other factors they deemed to be negative. Along these same lines was a concern by the students to give the "right" answer – or the answer they thought I wanted. This is most evident in self-ratings and answers of time spent reading. As mentioned before, I found this to be a factor in more instances at BBS than at MRPS. There is obviously a different relationship with students as a classroom teacher than as an "outsider" coming in to do a few tests. Also, as a classroom teacher, I was much more aware of student progress in areas other than those assessed and used for data collection. I also relied on observations in the classroom at BBS, which helped to bolster the

assessments that were used. I did not have the time to use the observations at MRPS in the same way.

- 7.2. Another advantage at BBS was the amount of time I was able to spend with each student. This time at MRPS was limited and affected the time spent in conversational interviews, as well as general assessments. The number of days spent with the students at BBS was also significantly higher of course. This was important in adding to the data collection process as I was able to see students use strategies and assessment information in practice.
- 7.3. One of the most significant limitations to the study, of course, is the fact that I could not do a "before" and "after" assessment at MRPS as I did at BBS. I do feel that the results and progress would be similar to BBS, but the study would be more effective had I been able to use the same time frame at MRPS as at BBS. Of course, to achieve comparable results, I would actually have to have taken over the entire literacy programme of the Grade Five at MRPS, which, under the circumstances, was not a possibility.

8. Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed the results of data collection conducted at both Bahrain Bayan School and Mountain Road Primary School. This analysis helps to answer the research questions presented earlier:

- Is motivation a significant factor in determining reading proficiency and overall levels of literacy in students learning English as a second additional language?
- Does enhanced motivation as set up by the use of Literature Circles and their associated operations and practices, improve reading proficiency and overall levels of literacy?

The results of the data collected at Bahrain Bayan School show a significant improvement in both reading proficiency and the motivation to read in the Grade Five students. Thus, Literature Circles does prove to be a beneficial approach to reading instruction in the classroom. As pointed out in the analysis of the results of the study, when motivation to read increased through the use of extensive reading and Literature Circles, reading ability improved. Tied in with this is the improved self-perception of reading ability, which is important for maintaining reading motivation.

Another important variable demonstrated by the results of the research is that outside reading is a significant contributing factor in both the motivation to read and reading proficiency. When students were encouraged to read at home, there was a much higher motivation level as well as reading level. This points to the need to parent education as to the importance of reading in the home. This will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Conclusion

1. Concluding remarks

In this concluding chapter, I will examine the implications and values of the research and give practical recommendations for the implementation of many of the principles. I will also discuss the obstacles to be overcome in putting the classroom structures into place.

2. Values of the study

The values of this study are numerous. We can help students become more independent, motivated and capable readers by giving them more choice and control. Motivation is a major indicator of reading achievement. Teachers must find ways to provide and maintain high levels of motivation by students to read. Using Literature Circles in the classroom provides this motivation and makes literacy more relevant. This higher level of motivation is necessary for students to read extensively. As shown by the research in Chapter Two as well as in this study, there is a positive correlation between reading outside of the classroom (reading for pleasure) and reading achievement. It is important to build this environment of reading for pleasure in the classroom, especially for children who do not come from a home environment where reading is the norm. Students need positive role

models of readers. They also need to see that reading is relevant to their lives. Through Literature Circles and the discussions, this relevance is emphasised as students make meaning from the literature.

Literature Circles also encourage a focus on the strengths of students as a variety of strategies and methods are used. Teachers will have more strategies available to help students become more proficient readers as well as more active learners.

2.1 Bridging the gap

As is shown in the difference in reading levels from the beginning of the school year in which the study took place to the end at BBS, when motivation to read is increased, reading proficiency levels also increase. This increased level of proficiency and the movement from basic literacy to higher levels of fluency will help students to bridge the gap they often face when moving from primary to secondary grades. In the majority of schools in South Africa, more English is required in the secondary grades and the language used becomes more complex. As reading is the basic indicator for all academic success, students with higher proficiency in reading are obviously more capable students.

2.2. (2002) South Africa Revised National Curriculum Statement

"Extended reading will be a very important way of building knowledge of vocabulary and structures." In looking at the Language Learning Outcomes from the South African Revised National Curriculum Statement from Grade R – 9, it is easy to see how beneficial Literature Circles can be in achieving these outcomes. The outcomes are as follows:

- ◆ Listening – The learner will be able to listen for information and enjoyment and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations.
- ◆ Speaking – The learner will be able to communicate confidently and effectively in spoken language in a wide variety of situations.
- ◆ Reading and Viewing – The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts.
- ◆ Writing – The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.
- ◆ Thinking and Reasoning – The learner will be able to use language to think and reason, as well as to access, process and use information for learning.

- ◆ Language Structure and Use – The learner will know and be able to use the sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts.

All of these outcomes are included in a comprehensive approach to reading, as demonstrated in Chapter Three. In this chapter describing the methodology used in the classroom structure, all of these outcomes are incorporated into a classroom based on constructivist principles and emphasising Literature Circles. A more specific look at some of the assessment standards included at the Grade Five level for listening will reiterate this incorporation:

We know the learner has met the standards of assessment when the learner:

- ◆ Responds personally;
- ◆ Discusses ethical, social and critical issues;
- ◆ Suggests an alternative ending for the story;
- ◆ Retells the story;
- ◆ Summarises the story

Again, all of these standards are a regular part of Literature Circles and with practice, students become more fluent in all levels of the language.

3. Obstacles

3.1. Resources

The most prevalent obstacle is that it is difficult to find enough appropriate reading material for Literature Circles. It is difficult enough to find books for enjoyable free reading, much less 6 – 8 copies of novels at varying levels. As experienced at MRPS, the readers available for classroom reading are an average of 20 years old and do not hold much interest for the students. Each Grade level does have some multiple copies of readers, but again, these are old and often above the frustration level of the majority of students. Students will not enjoy reading material that is higher than their frustration level.

Also, although the library is better equipped than many schools, the books are also quite old. Students need a wide variety of books available at many different levels in order to sustain the enjoyment of free reading. Teachers also see this as an inhibitor. As stated by a teacher of Grade Three at MRPS, "The problem is not *teaching* children to read, it is *keeping* the interest once they can read. We don't have enough books to keep readers reading, even if they are keen."

This is certainly the most difficult obstacle as there is no easy solution. Budgets are tight as it is, and there is little room for the negotiation of adding books in many schools.

3.2 Teacher Education

The majority of teachers are not familiar with Literature Circles or the structure of this type of classroom. Again, much of this is due to lack of resources. However, teachers can be educated and as is my experience at MRPS, are quite keen to find ways to motivate students to read and improve reading proficiency. An example of this openness to learn comes from a session of staff development in which I introduced Literature Circles and the philosophy behind them. Many teachers were interested in the fact that students should be reading below their frustration level and it is not as important that they read at their respective grade level. Many of these teachers had insisted that students take only grade level appropriate books out from the library, but found that students did not read them. By opening the choice of all books at all levels to students, many students were choosing books at easier levels, but were actually reading them. This small change increased both enjoyment of reading and motivation.

Included in this discussion of teacher education is the importance of parent education. Parents must be made aware of the significance of reading in the home. In Bahrain, students were given the homework assignment of reading for at least 20 –30 minutes each night. At the beginning of the year, parents questioned the benefit of this. I had many conversations with parents who didn't understand why students were not getting worksheets and spelling lists for homework and many of them said they just didn't think reading each night was going to help their child. This led me to conduct a series of workshops and information nights for parents regarding the importance of reading and especially reading outside of school. With this knowledge as well as seeing the improvement in reading ability, I did not have any parents questioning the practice of reading for homework for the remainder of the year. In fact, many parents said they had also formed the habit of reading in the evening as they knew that this would also be of benefit to their children.

There is a definite need for this type of parent education at Mountain Road Primary School as well. As many parents do not come from a culture of reading themselves, it is important to begin educating them on the benefits of outside reading. As some parents do not have the resources to provide books for their children, it would also be important to

point out various other reading materials as well as establishing a positive literacy environment.

3.3 Number of students and time constraints

Many classrooms have large numbers of students, and while this is not an inhibiting factor for Literature Circles, it does make the management of this type of classroom structure more difficult. More difficult still is managing to fit in everything that is to be assessed with the stringent curriculum. Again, this is not impossible and the integration of subjects in the curriculum is ultimately of more benefit to students. However, this takes a great deal of work, organisation, time management and teacher education.

4. Concluding remarks

Learner-centred approaches such as Literature Circles with students with English as a second language are a way of ensuring time in class is highly productive and learning is practical and relevant. For students, they are more empowered, which leads to a higher level of motivation and achievement. Students move from passive learners to active learners who take control of their learning. The learner-centred, comprehensive approach described in this study will allow students to reach higher levels

of proficiency in reading and English in general, as well as helping them to become life-long readers.

Bibliography of sources used

- Allen, Janet and Gonzalez, Kyle. 1998. *There's Room for Me Here – Literacy Workshop in the Middle School*. Markham, Ontario. Stenhouse Publishers.
- Ashworth, Eric. 1990. *Language Policy in the Primary School – Content and Management*. London, UK. Routledge Publishers.
- Atwell, Nancie. 1987. *In the Middle – Writing, Reading and Learning with Adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann Publishers.
- Baker, Colin (Ed.) 1995. *Policy and Practice in Bilingual Education: Extending the Foundations*. London, UK. WBC Ltd.
- Barrentine, Shelby J. 1999. *Reading Assessment Principles and Practices for Elementary Teachers*. Newark, Delaware. International Reading Association.
- Booth, David. 1996. *Literacy Techniques*. Markham, Ontario. Pembroke Publishers Limited.
- Brooks, Jacqueline Grennon and Brooks, Martin G. 1993. *The Case for Constructivist Classrooms*. Alexandria, VA. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Brown, Gillian; Malmkjaer, Kirsten; Williams, John. 1996. *Performance and Competence in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, Mary Daniels. *Literature Circles Build Excitement for Books!* 18 August 2000. URL http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr259.shtml.
- Brumfit, Christopher; Moon, Jayne; Tongue, Ray. 1995. *Teaching English to Children – From Practice to Principle*. Essex, UK. Longman Group Ltd.
- Cambourne, Brian. 1988. *The Whole Story – Natural Learning and the Acquisition of Literacy in the Classroom*. Auckland, New Zealand. Ashton Scholastic Ltd.

- Daniels, Harvey. 1994. *Literature Circles – Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom*. Markham, Ontario. Stenhouse Publishers.
- Daniels, Harvey; Zemelman, Steve; Bizar, Marilyn. October 1999. "Whole Language Works: Sixty Years of Research." *Educational Leadership*. Pp. 32 – 37.
- Day, Richard R. and Bamford, Julian. 1998. *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom*. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press.
- Edelsky, Carole. 1991. *With Literacy and Justice for All – Rethinking the Social in Language and Education*. London, UK. The Falmer Press.
- Ellis, Robert A. Flexibility in Genre-Based Literacy Pedagogy. ASET- HERDSA 2000. URL [http:// www.aset.org.au](http://www.aset.org.au).
- Ellis, Rod. 1990. *Instructed Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge, Massachussets. Blackwell Publishers.
- Fitzgerald, Jill. October/November/December 2000. "How Will Bilingual/ESL Programs in Literacy Change in the Next Millennium?" *Reading Research Quarterly*. Vol. 35, No. 4. Pp. 520 – 523.
- Frank, Carolyn R.; Dixon, Carol N.; Brandts, Lois R. February 2001. "Bears, Trolls and Pagemasters: Learning about Learners in Book Clubs." *The Reading Teacher*. Vol. 54, No. 5. Pp. 448 – 462.
- Freeman, Yvonne S. And Freeman, David E. 1992. *Whole Language for Second Language Learners*. Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann Publishers.
- Galda, Lee; Ash, Gwynne Ellen; Cullinan, Bernice E. Research on Children's Literature. 15 April 2001. URL <http://www.readingonline.org/articles/handbook/galda/index>.
- Genesee, Fred. 1994. *Educating Second Language Children – The Whole Child, The Whole Curriculum, the Whole Community*. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press.
- Gibbons, Pauline. 1991. *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*. Newtown, Australia. Primary English Teaching Association.
- Gordon, Carol. 2000. *Information Literacy in Action*. Saxmundham, Suffolk. John Catt Educational Publication.

- Hill, Bonnie Campbell; Johnson, Nancy J.; Noe, Katherine L. 1995. *Literature Circles and Response*. Norwood, MA. Christopher – Gordon Publishers.
- Hill, Bonnie Campbell; Johnson, Nancy J.; Noe, Katherine L. 2001. *Literature Circles Resource Guide*. Norwood, MA. Christopher – Gordon Publishers.
- Huckin, Thomas; Haynes, Margot; Coady, James. 1993. *Second Language Reading and Vocabulary Learning*. Norwood, NJ. Ablex Publishing Corp.
- Hunter-Grundin, Elizabeth. 1979. *Literacy – A Systematic Start*. London, UK. Harper and Row, Ltd.
- Ivey, Gay. 2000. *Redesigning Reading Instruction*. Alexandria, VA. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Johnson, Terry D. and Louis, Daphne R. 1987. *Literacy Through Literature*. Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann Publishers.
- Krashen, Stephen. *Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition*. 17 April 2000. URL <http://www.sk.com.br/sk-krash.html>.
- Krashen, Stephen. *The National Reading Panel Report on Phonics: Consistent With and Supportive of the Comprehensive Hypothesis (We Learn to Read by Reading)*. 17 April 2001. URL http://www.languagebooks.com/2.0/articles/nrp_phonics.html.
- Krashen, Stephen. 1993. *The Power of Reading – Insights from the Research*. Englewood, CO. Libraries Unlimited, Inc.
- Larsen-Freeman, Diane. 1991. "Second Language Acquisition Research". TESOL Quarterly. Vol 25, No.2. Pp. 22-44.
- Lewin, Larry and Shoemaker, Betty Jean. 1998. *Great Performances – Creating Classroom-Based Assessment Tasks*. Alexandria, VA. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Lyon, G. Reid. 1997. *Why Reading is not a Natural Process*. Washington, D.C. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.
- MacDonald, Carol. 1990. *Crossing the Threshold into Standard Three*. Pretoria, South Africa. HSRC Publishers.

- MacDonald, Carol. 1991. *Eager to Talk and Learn and Think*. Cape Town, South Africa. Maskew-Miller and Longman Publishers.
- Making a Difference Means Making it Different: Honoring Children's Rights to Excellent Reading Instruction*. March 2000. URL <http://www.reading.org/positions/MADMMID.html>
- Martinez-Roldan, Carmen M. And Lopez-Robertson, Julia M. December 1999/ January 2000. "Initiating Literature Circles in a First Grade Bilingual Classroom." *The Reading Teacher*. Vol. 53, No. 4. Pp. 270 – 281.
- McDonough, Siobhan. *Study: TV on, Reading Ability Off*. 28 October 2003. URL <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/10/28/health>
- McLaughlin, Barry. 1987. *Theories of Second Language English Learning*. London, UK. Edward Arnold Publishers.
- Miles, JoAnn and Sweetland, John D. February 2000. "A Summer Reading Program for Second Language Learners." *The Reading Teacher*. Vol. 54, No.5. Pp. 474 – 481.
- Moats, Louisa C. 1999. *Phonology, Reading and Spelling: Implementing Research-Based Strategies to Address Early Reading Difficulties*. New England Branch IDA.
- Noe, Katherine L. and Johnson, Nancy J. 1999. *Getting Started with Literature Circles*. Norwood, MA. Christopher – Gordon Publishers.
- O'Malley, J Michael; Chamot, Anna Uhl. 1990. *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press.
- Parry, Kate (Ed.) 2000. *Language and Literacy in Uganda – Towards a Sustainable Reading Culture*. Kampala, Uganda. Fountain Publishers Ltd.
- Pieronek, Florence Therese. February 2001. "Inservice Project: Upper Primary Brunei Darussalam Teacher's Responses to Using Four Specific Reading Strategies." *The Reading Teacher*. Vol. 54, No. 5. Pp. 522 – 532.
- Pilgreen, Janice L. 2000. *The SSR Handbook – How to Organize and Manage A Sustained Silent Reading Program*. Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann Publishers.

- Reyes, Maria de la Luz. March 1995. "A Process Approach to Literacy." National Council of Teachers of English. Vol. 25, No. 3. Pp. 292 – 313.
- Rhodes, Lynne K. And Shanklin, Nancy L. 1993. *Windows into Literacy – Assessing Learners K – 8*. Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann Publishers.
- Routman, Regie. 1991. *Invitations – Changing as Teachers and Learners*. Portsmouth, MA. Heinemann Educational Books.
- Routman, Regie. 1996. *Literacy at the Crossroads*. Portsmouth, MA. Heinemann Educational Books.
- Routman, Regie. 1988. *Transitions – From Literature to Literacy*. Portsmouth, MA. Heinemann Educational Books.
- Schurr, Sandra. 1992. *The ABC's of Evaluation – 26 Alternative Ways to Assess Student Progress*. Columbus, OH. National Middle School Association.
- Snow, C.E.; Burns, S.M.; Griffin, P. 1998. *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. Washington, D.C. National Academy Press.
- Street, Brian V. (Ed.) 1993. *Cross – Cultural Approaches to Literacy*. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press.
- Street, Brian V. (Ed.) 2001. *Literacy and Development – Ethnographic Perspectives*. London, UK. Routledge Press.
- Street, Brian V. 1984. *Literacy in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press.
- Street, Brian. May 2003. "What's 'new' in New Literacy Studies? Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. Current Issues in Comparative Education. Vol. 5, No.2.
- Strickland, Dorothy. 1998. *What's Basic in Beginning Reading? Finding Common Ground*. Alexandria, VA. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Tomlinson, Carol Ann. 1999. *The Differentiated Classroom – Responding to the Needs of All Learners*. Alexandria, VA. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Towle, Wendy. 2000. *The Art of the Reading Workshop*. Alexandria, VA. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Williams, James D. and Snipper, Grace C. 1990. *Literacy and Bilingualism*. White Plains, NY. Longman Group.
- Willis, Scott. 1995. *Whole Language – Finding the Surest Way to Literacy*. Alexandria, VA. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Wragg, E.C.; Wragg, C.M.; Haynes, G.S.; Chamberlin, R.P. 1998. *Improving Literacy in the Primary School*. London, UK. Routledge Publishers
- Wray, David and Medwell, Jane. 1993. *Literacy and Practice in the Primary Years*. London, UK. Routledge Publishers.

READING QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____ Grade _____ Date _____

1. The language I speak most often at home is _____.
2. The language I speak most often with my friends is _____.
3. The language I prefer to speak is _____.
4. At home, the language my mother speaks is _____.
5. At home, the language my father speaks is _____.

Rate the following from 1 – 10 (1 being the lowest, 10 being highest):

6. My fluency in English _____.
7. My mother's fluency in English _____.
8. My father's fluency in English _____.

Choose on of the following answers for each:

9. I think I am.....
 - ☐ A very good student
 - ☐ A good student
 - ☐ An OK student
 - ☐ A poor student
10. I think I am...
 - ☐ A very good reader
 - ☐ A good reader
 - ☐ An OK reader
 - ☐ A poor reader
11. At home, in my free time, I read....
 - ☐ Most of the time
 - ☐ Some of the time
 - ☐ Almost never
 - ☐ Never
12. My parents read...
 - ☐ Most of the time
 - ☐ Some of the time
 - ☐ Almost never
 - ☐ Never
13. How many books do you think you have read in the last month? _____
14. Do you have a favourite book? _____ If so, what is the title?

15. Do you have a favourite author? _____ If so, who?

16. How many hours a day do you spend:

Reading _____

Watching TV _____

On the computer _____

Playing sports _____

17. Approximately how many books do own? _____

18. What is your favourite subject in school? _____

19. What is your favourite hobby? _____

20. Finish this sentence: Reading is: _____

MOTIVATION TO READ PROFILE
READING SURVEY

Name _____ Date _____

Sample: I am in...

- ☐ Third grade
- ☐ Fourth grade
- ☐ Fifth grade
- ☐ Sixth grade

1. My friends think I am...
 - ☐ A very good reader
 - ☐ A good reader
 - ☐ An OK reader
 - ☐ A poor reader
2. Reading a book is something I like to do...
 - ☐ Never
 - ☐ Not very often
 - ☐ Sometimes
 - ☐ Often
3. I read...
 - ☐ Not as well as my friends
 - ☐ About the same as my friends
 - ☐ A little better than my friends
 - ☐ A lot better than my friends
4. My best friends think reading is...
 - ☐ Really fun
 - ☐ Fun
 - ☐ OK to do
 - ☐ No fun at all
5. When I come to a word I don't know, I can...
 - ☐ Almost always figure it out
 - ☐ Sometimes figure it out
 - ☐ Almost never figure it out
 - ☐ Never figure it out
6. I tell my friends about good books I read...
 - ☐ I never do this
 - ☐ I almost never do this
 - ☐ I do this some of the time
 - ☐ I do this often
7. When I reading to myself, I understand...
 - ☐ Almost everything I read
 - ☐ Some of what I read
 - ☐ Almost none of what I read

- ☐ None of what I read
8. People who read often are...
- ☐ Very interesting
- ☐ Interesting
- ☐ Not very interesting
- ☐ Boring
9. I am...
- ☐ A poor reader
- ☐ An OK reader
- ☐ A good reader
- ☐ A very good reader
10. I think libraries are...
- ☐ A great place to spend time
- ☐ An interesting place to spend time
- ☐ An OK place to spend time
- ☐ A boring place to spend time
11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading aloud...
- ☐ Every day
- ☐ Almost every day
- ☐ Once in a while
- ☐ Never
12. Knowing how to read well is...
- ☐ Not very important
- ☐ Sort of important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Very important
13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I...
- ☐ Can never think of an answer
- ☐ Have trouble thinking of an answer
- ☐ Sometimes think of an answer
- ☐ Always think of an answer
14. I think reading is...
- ☐ A boring way to spend time
- ☐ An OK way to spend time
- ☐ An interesting way to spend time
- ☐ A great way to spend time
15. Reading is...
- ☐ Very easy for me
- ☐ Kind of easy for me
- ☐ Kind of hard for me
- ☐ Very hard for me
16. When I grow up, I will spend...
- ☐ None of my time reading
- ☐ Very little of my time reading
- ☐ Some of my time reading
- ☐ A lot of my time reading

17. When I am in a group talking about stories, I...
- ☐ Almost never talk about my ideas
 - ☐ Sometimes talk about my ideas
 - ☐ Almost always talk about my ideas
 - ☐ Always talk about my ideas
18. I would like for my teacher to read book out loud to the class...
- ☐ Every day
 - ☐ Almost every day
 - ☐ Once in a while
 - ☐ Never
19. When I read out loud, I am a...
- ☐ Poor reader
 - ☐ OK reader
 - ☐ Good reader
 - ☐ Very good reader
20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel...
- ☐ Very happy
 - ☐ Sort of happy
 - ☐ Sort of unhappy
 - ☐ Very unhappy

THE READER SELF-PERCEPTION SCALE

Listed below are statements about reading. Please read each statement carefully. Then circle the letters that show how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

Use the following:

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

U = Undecided

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

1. I think I am a good reader.	SA	A	U	D	SD
2. I can tell that my teacher likes to listen to me read.	SA	A	U	D	SD
3. My teacher thinks that my reading is fine.	SA	A	U	D	SD
4. I read faster than other kids.	SA	A	U	D	SD
5. I like to read aloud.	SA	A	U	D	SD
6. When I read, I can figure out words better than other kids.	SA	A	U	D	SD
7. My classmates like to listen to me read.	SA	A	U	D	SD
8. I feel good inside when I read.	SA	A	U	D	SD
9. My classmates think that I read pretty well.	SA	A	U	D	SD
10. When I read, I don't have to try as hard as I used to.	SA	A	U	D	SD
11. I seem to know more words than other kids when I read.	SA	A	U	D	SD
12. People in my family think I am a good reader.	SA	A	U	D	SD
13. I am getting better at reading.	SA	A	U	D	SD
14. I understand what I read as well as other kids do.	SA	A	U	D	SD
15. When I read, I need less help than I used to.	SA	A	U	D	SD
16. Reading makes me feel happy inside.	SA	A	U	D	SD
17. My teacher thinks I am a good reader.	SA	A	U	D	SD
18. Reading is easier for me than it used to be.	SA	A	U	D	SD
19. I read faster than I could before.	SA	A	U	D	SD
20. I read better than other kids in my class.	SA	A	U	D	SD
21. I feel calm when I read.	SA	A	U	D	SD
22. I read more than other kids.	SA	A	U	D	SD
23. I understand what I read better than I could before.	SA	A	U	D	SD
24. I can figure out words better than I could before.	SA	A	U	D	SD
25. I feel comfortable when reading.	SA	A	U	D	SD
26. I think reading is relaxing.	SA	A	U	D	SD
27. I read better now than I could before.	SA	A	U	D	SD
28. When I read, I recognize more words than I used to.	SA	A	U	D	SD
29. Reading makes me feel good.	SA	A	U	D	SD
30. Other kids think I am a good reader.	SA	A	U	D	SD
31. People in my family think I read pretty well.	SA	A	U	D	SD
32. I enjoy reading.	SA	A	U	D	SD
33. People in my family like to listen to me read.	SA	A	U	D	SD

METACOMPREHENSION STRATEGY INDEX

Directions: Think about what kinds of things you can do to help you understand a story better before, during and after you read it. Read each of the lists of four statements and decide which one of them would help YOU the most. *There are no right answers.* It is just what *you* think would help you the most. Circle the letter of the statement you choose.

- I. In each of the following, choose the one statement that tells a good thing to do to help you understand a story better *before* you read it.
1. Before I begin reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. See how many pages are in the story.
 - B. Look up all the big words in the dictionary.
 - C. Make some guesses about what I think will happen in the story.
 - D. Think about what has happened so far in the story.
 2. Before I begin reading, it is a good idea to.
 - A. Look at the pictures to see what the story is about.
 - B. Decide how long it will take to read the story.
 - C. Sound out the words I don't know.
 - D. Check to see if the story is making sense.
 3. Before I begin reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Ask someone to read the story to me.
 - B. Read the title to see what the story is about.
 - C. Check to see if most of the words have long or short vowels in them.
 - D. Check to see if the pictures are in order and make sense.
 4. Before I begin reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Check to see that no pages are missing.
 - B. Make a list of all the words I am not sure about.
 - C. Use the title and pictures to help make guesses about what will happen in the story.
 - D. Read the last sentence so I know how the story ends.
 5. Before I begin reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Decide on why I am going to read the story.
 - B. Use the difficult words to help make guesses about what will happen in the story.
 - C. Reread some parts to figure out what is happening if things aren't making sense.
 - D. Ask for help with the difficult words.
 6. Before I begin reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Retell all of the main points that have happened so far.
 - B. Ask myself questions that I would like to have answered in the story.
 - C. Think about the meanings of the words that have more than one meaning.
 - D. Look through the story to find all of the words with three or more syllables.
 7. Before I begin reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Check to see if I have read this story before.
 - B. Use my questions and guesses as a reason for reading the story.

- C. Make sure I can pronounce all the words before I start.
- D. Think of a better title for the story.
- 8. Before I begin reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Think of what I already know about the things I see in the pictures.
 - B. See how many pages are in the story.
 - C. Choose the best part of the story and read it again.
 - D. Read the story aloud to someone.
- 9. Before I begin reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Practice reading the story aloud.
 - B. Retell all of the main points to make sure I can remember the story.
 - C. Think of what the people in the story might be like.
 - D. Decide if I have enough time to read the story.
- 10. Before I begin reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Check to see if I am understanding the story so far.
 - B. Check to see if the words have more than one meaning.
 - C. Think about where the story might be taking place.
 - D. List all of the important details.

II. In each of the following, choose the one statement that tells a good thing to do to help you understand a story *while* you are reading it.

- 11. While I'm reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Read the story very slowly so that I will not miss any important parts.
 - B. Read the title to see what the story is about.
 - C. Check to see if the pictures have anything missing.
 - D. See if the story is making sense by seeing if I can tell what's happened so far.
- 12. While I'm reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Stop to retell the main points to see if I am understanding what has happened so far.
 - B. Read the story quickly so that I can find out what happened.
 - C. Read on the beginning and the end of the story to find out what it is about.
 - D. Skip the parts that are too difficult for me.
- 13. While I'm reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Look up all the big words in the dictionary.
 - B. Put the book away and find another one if things aren't making sense.
 - C. Keep thinking about the title and the pictures to help me decide what is going to happen next.
 - D. Keep track of how many pages I have left to read.
- 14. While I'm reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Keep track of how long it is taking me to read the story.
 - B. Check to see if I can answer any of the questions I asked before I started reading.
 - C. Read the title to see what the story is going to be about.
 - D. Add the missing details to the pictures.
- 15. While I'm reading, it's a good idea to:
 - A. Have someone read the story aloud to me.
 - B. Keep track of how many pages I have read.

- C. List the story's main characters.
 - D. Check to see if my guesses are right or wrong.
16. While I'm reading, it's a good idea to:
- A. Check to see that the characters are real.
 - B. Make a lot of guesses about what is going to happen next.
 - C. Not look at the pictures because they might confuse me.
 - D. Read the story aloud to someone.
17. While I'm reading, it's a good idea to:
- A. Try to answer the questions I asked myself.
 - B. Try not to confuse what I already know with what I'm reading about.
 - C. Read the story silently.
 - D. Check to see if I am saying the new vocabulary words correctly.
18. While I'm reading, it's a good idea to:
- A. Try to see if my guesses are going right or wrong.
 - B. Reread to be sure I haven't missed any of the words.
 - C. Decide on why I am reading the story.
 - D. List what happened first, second, third and so on.
19. While I'm reading, it's a good idea to:
- A. See if I can recognize the new vocabulary words.
 - B. Be careful not to skip any parts of the story.
 - C. Check to see how many of the words I already know.
 - D. Keep thinking of what I already know about the things and ideas in the story to help me decide what is going to happen.
20. While I'm reading it's a good idea to:
- A. Reread some parts or read ahead to see if I can figure out what is happening if things aren't making sense.
 - B. Take my time reading so that I can be sure I understand what is happening.
 - C. Change the ending so it makes sense.
 - D. Check to see if there are enough pictures to help make the story ideas clear.

II. In each of the following, choose the one statement that tells a good thing to do to help you understand a story better *after* you have read it.

21. After I have read a story, it's a good idea to:
- A. Count how many pages I read with no mistakes.
 - B. Check to see if there were enough pictures to go with the story to make it interesting.
 - C. Check to see if I met my purpose for reading the story.
 - D. Underline the causes and effects.
22. After I have read a story, it's a good idea to:
- A. Underline the main idea.
 - B. Retell the main points of the whole story so that I can check to see if I understood it.
 - C. Read the story again to be sure I said all of the words right.
 - D. Practice reading the story aloud.

23. After I have read a story, it's a good idea to:
- A. Read the title and look over the story to see what it is about.
 - B. Check to see if I skipped any of the vocabulary words.
 - C. Think about what made me make good or bad predictions in the story.
 - D. Make a guess about what will happen in the story.
24. After I have read a story, it's a good idea to:
- A. Look up all of the big words in the dictionary.
 - B. Read the best parts aloud.
 - C. Have someone read the story aloud to me.
 - D. Think about how the story was like the things I already know about before I started reading.
25. After I have read a story, it's a good idea to:
- A. Think about how I would have acted if I were the main character in the story.
 - B. Practice reading the story silently for practice of good reading.
 - C. Look over the story title and pictures to see what will happen.
 - D. Make a list of the things I understood most.