

# Silent Reading: A Case of Sustained Silent Reading in a Western Cape Grade 5 Classroom

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## 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.

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## Abstract

“Well-developed *Reading and Viewing* skills are central to successful learning across the curriculum” (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 10).

Previous sociocultural research as well as the South African Department of Basic Education has shown the importance of reading- both in terms of achievement and general student well-being. However, the South African curriculum seems to provide little in the way of detailing how to foster a culture of reading in schools and what this reading should look like. As a result, I became interested in schools in the Western Cape area that seemed to have a good reading culture to see what they did to foster reading. It became clear that such schools made the move to incorporating reading for pleasure into the school day and curriculum. One of the ways was through daily Sustained Silent Reading periods (SSR-periods). Cattus Primary, a primary school in an affluent Western Cape suburb, had both a strong reading culture and held daily SSR-periods and it became the site of the case study.

The case study focused on one class of Grade five students, their teacher and the librarian in a Western Cape suburban school who were observed, interviewed and (in the case of the students) given a questionnaire to determine what happened during the mandatory, daily SSR-periods. The focus, during observation and interviews, was on how SSR was enacted, the participants' sentiments regarding reading, how their actions contradicted or supported these sentiments and finally the role of the library with reference to the SSR-periods.

Observing and analysing through the lens of the sociocultural perspective and new literacy studies (NLS) of literacy events, I discovered that although SSR-periods were being held, literacy events like the SSR-periods are not reducible to observable parts of literacy because “they also involve values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships” (Barton, 2006: 7-8). I discovered that identity performance, attitudes towards reading as well as the teacher's involvement played a major role in the SSR-periods success and more so the reader/student's motivation to read during these periods. Furthermore, the library played a crucial role in school reading culture and could be used as a supplementary to the SSR-period, or as a third space (Moje et al 2004).

## DEDICATION

کم کم ، روز به روز

For Doris Mono Motjuwadi and Nongozile Jostina Mwanda.

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# Chapter 1. Introduction and Rationale

## 1.1 Rationale

Traditionally literacy, particularly reading, has been predicated as a key resource not only in the academic (or primary and secondary school) setting but also in later years (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003). In other words, in this autonomous model literacy has been seen as being an integral to workplace learning and development. Reading, as part of being literate, therefore has 'consequences' that extend beyond just the classroom setting and academic success (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Brandt, 2001). As part of the autonomous and dominant approach, the 'universal' skill of reading therefore is an essential component of an individual's literacy development but this model focuses heavily on the acquisition of the skill of reading and not so much on the fact that reading (literacy) is a necessary social practice (Street, 1985). That is, literacy is not "simply an individual cognitive activity, but is a *communicative tool* for different social groups with social rules about who can produce and use literacies for specific uses" (Larson & Marsh, 2006: 15. Emphasis is my own). Failure to become literate essentially means the individual's failure to become a functioning member of certain social groups and even communities- the effects of which can be quite critical to the individual's development and general well-being. Being literate has far greater 'consequences' for the individual than just acquiring a skill, and could be one of many reasons that poor levels in achievement in literacy (and numeracy) are usually shown in the light of a national crisis.

More so the gap in achievement between girls for the most part fairing better than boys in regards to literacy has been well-documented and is a cause for concern amongst researchers and teachers alike. (see Arnot et al., 1999; Flynn & Rahbar, 1994; Scroggins, 1993; Younger, Warrington, & McLellan, 2002) As such, education systems (both in South Africa and abroad) have taken steps to not only overcome but also to understand this failure to achieve amongst students, be it through policy or independent initiatives in schools. Reasons advanced for these gaps in achievement between boys and girls vary from policy construction and implementation, to biological differences in development, to classroom and teacher practices, home environment and culture or even the reading material provided for students. (Geske & Ozola, 2008; Linnakylä, et al. (2004); Mullis, et al. (2003)) In spite of all the research done, the literacy problem remains. I initially began my research



with the intent of foregrounding gender and the gaps in achievement as the central focus of my study, using the SACMEQ results as the basis of my research.

SACMEQ, an African transnational partnership of education ministries, policy-makers and researchers who, in conjunction with UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), have made it their goal to improve the research capacity and technical skills of educational planners thus improving the educational system. SACMEQ have conducted three school surveys in participating countries (namely: Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania (Mainland), Tanzania (Zanzibar), Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), specifically SACMEQ I, II and III. These surveys and tests collect background information on the schooling and home environments of students, and in addition, test students and teachers in both numeracy and literacy. The most recent of the tests, SACMEQ III, tested 61396 Grade 6 students, 8026 Grade 6 teachers, in 2779 schools in 14 countries. (2007) In South Africa more specifically, SACMEQ III tested 9071 grade 6 students, 1163 teachers, in 392 schools. When regarding the reading test scores (using the SACMEQ Competency Levels for Reading Scale, see Ross et. al 2004), six of the fourteen countries' (one of which was South Africa) girls scored significantly better than boys. Further, it was the case that with most of the SACMEQ participating countries, the gender gap was consistent between rural and urban areas as well as between low and high SES groups although the size of gender gap varied depending on the different school locations and SES groups. Saito (2011) cites some of the possible reasons behind the gender differences in learning/literacy achievement on the SACMEQ tests. On a previous study of the SACMEQ results, Saito found that there were,

“no gender differences in the reading achievement of Grade 6 pupils in the sub-region. Rather, the more important differences were the disparities between geographical locations and socio-economic levels. They concluded that the absence of gender differences was not due to the participation of elite girls [the privileged group of girls from a high SES-background expected to excel in the school they were enrolled in (Saito, 2011: 10)] because at the upper primary level the enrolment level was equal at around 50 percent” (Saito, 2011:17).

Saito's analysis of the results therefore showed there to be a difference in achievement between the genders (whether it be the boys doing better than the girls or vice versa) but also intimated that the differences existed because of a number of factors. The differences in gender regarding performance/achievement are reflected in the ANA results too. Girl learners consistently (across all three testing grades, namely grades 3, 6 and 9) outperformed boys in both the home language and first additional language reading (and writing)

tests. Although the tests reiterate the known difference in achievement between the genders in terms of literacy/reading, the ANAs do little in the way of accounting for (and therefore in some way remedying) said differences. I think it is worth reiterating that 'traditionally' across numerous studies of gender and reading amongst young adolescents, the focus has tended to mostly be on mean differences across entire samples of male and female participants which have found that gender differences will show boys to be poorer performers most of the time.

Upon further research, it became clear that reading and the links it had to both achievement and general student well-being were of greater importance and that gender is more of a corroboratory factor in possible reasons behind the 'national crisis' that is students' failure to achieve. Literacy assessments like the ANA and SACMEQ's, although important in highlighting the imbalances and areas for improvement in student achievement, are incomplete in that they tend to feed into the "Foucauldian dividing practices that dominate [most] education system[s]" (Gilmore, 2003: 10). Literacy and reading involve social, behavioural and discursive practices that can be explored and understood through an ethnographic lens (Heath, 2008; Taylor, 1983; Hymes, 1972). Positioning this research within ethnography of literacy allows for an exploration and deeper understanding of the aforementioned practices and subsequently how schools create certain reading cultures. One of the ways school's are able to create and foster a reading culture was through (Uninterrupted) Sustained Silent Reading Periods (SSR-periods). SSR-periods can be taken up as a literacy practice and embedded in a school's range of valued practices. In my research, I felt it worth exploring the take up and enactment of SSR-periods as literacy practice in one particular site by observing the specific events that make up this specific practice. SSR-periods (which can also be referred to as High Intensity Practise, Positive Outcomes While Enjoying Reading or Drop Everything and Read), are basically time set aside for students to read in silence and be uninterrupted (Hunt, 1971). Hunt's program, publicised as the 'Individualised Reading Program' was initially created to improve student's skills in regards to reading by means of becoming better individual readers without any input from their instructors or teachers. The Individualised Reading Program was comprised of six main principles- namely those of, silent reading, minimal guidance from the instructor, an enforced quiet environment, development of reading skills and finally scheduled talks surrounding the texts students were reading during these reading times (Hunt, 1971: 27). Although SSR has gained popularity over time and is generally an understood and utilised program in schools, there has not been much done in the way of investigating whether

such programs have had a positive effect on student achievement (in regards to both reading and general academic performances).

As such, I thought it worth it to focus on the Sustained Silent Reading periods that happen in some South African primary and secondary schools for two reasons: firstly, it may provide (limited) insight to the possible importance in improving student's literacy, reading ability and possible academic achievement and secondly, only a few studies investigate what actually *happens* in Sustained Silent Reading periods. However, before addressing my own study, I think it is worth briefly looking at the South African curriculum and what is required of students in terms of literacy.

As before mentioned, various reasons have been cited for findings regarding both the differences in and low levels of literacy achievement and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) addresses this problem and aims to remedy it in their weekly (literacy) requirements.

“Well-developed *Reading and Viewing* skills are central to successful learning across the curriculum. Learners develop proficiency in Reading and Viewing a wide range of literary and non-literary texts, including visual texts. Learners recognise how genre and register reflect the purpose, audience and context of texts. Through classroom and independent reading, learners become critical and creative thinkers.” (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 10)

The majority of the CAPS document's stipulations are in accordance with the view that “we learn to read by reading” (Frank Smith as quoted in Nuttall, 2005: 128) and that reading is a vital skill to have in regards to an individual's overall development. To accommodate for the crucial role literacy plays in overall learning, the department have allocated a significant amount of time to literacy learning (which is referred to as “Home Language” throughout the document). “The teaching time for Home Language is 6 hours per week. All language content is taught within a two-week cycle (12hours)” (Department of Basic Education, 2011) and all reading is to take place within those 6 hours. The CAPS document is explicit in the genre/types of texts the students in intermediate phase should be engaging with and even details the resources each of the classes should have to foster literacy development. (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 15) The CAPS document is clear in what it requires from the students and teachers in regards to reading for assessment but fails to do so in regards to what the student does *when they are own*- that is outside of the

context and space of the classroom. In other words, the CAPS document makes mention of and even promotes independent reading as something teachers should encourage students to do in “any spare time that they have” (Department of Education, 2011: 10), but doesn't elaborate on what exactly independent reading comprises of and *how* it should be done. Students, by this document, are merely required “to demonstrate independent reading (reading widely for pleasure, information and learning)” (Department of Basic Education, 2011:17). I am interested in this ‘gap’ in policy.

Although CAPS requires that time be allocated for independent reading it is not always the case that this happens, and when it does it is never specified what is required of both the students and teachers. As such, I wish to undertake a case study of one Western Cape school which does partake in timetabled independent reading by means of Sustained Silent Reading periods. To my knowledge not much research has been done on sustained silent reading periods and whether it has any effect on a student's overall motivation to read and their positioning as a ‘successful reader’. Further, with the acknowledgement that at-home and in-school reading practices differ, I think that these sustained silent reading periods could possibly be viewed in the light of Third Space. “Third space theory has been of particular interest to those seeking to develop continuity between home and school literacies” (Levy, 2008: 44). It is my hope that in observing and trying to understand what happens in these Sustained Silent Reading periods, that is independent reading, (albeit on a small-scale) the move towards understanding what motivates these specific readers and what happens in specific silent reading periods can be made.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

1. How, if at all, do Sustained Silent Reading periods construct and affect reading practices of participants and their relationship to literacy and text?
  - A. What do a class of grade 5 students do during Sustained Reading Period?
2. How does the teacher position the students as readers during the SSR-periods and how do they position themselves?
3. How do the library sessions support the SSR-periods?

## **1.3 Chapter Outline**

Chapter 1: Introduction, Rationale and Research Questions.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review. In this chapter I present the socio-cultural perspective on literacy and the New Literacy Studies (NLS) as the theoretical framework for my thesis. I define Third Space theories (More et al), Discourse analysis and Positioning Theories and research surrounding Sustained Silent Reading Periods (SSR-periods).

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology. In this chapter I address my use of case study, the participants as well as the methods of data collection and the analysis thereafter.

Chapter 4: Data Description, Presentation and Analysis. In this chapter I focus on the literacy practices of a Grade 5 class during their daily and mandatory SSR-period. An analysis of the SSR-period highlighted how each of the participants positioned themselves and the possible effect this had on their experience of the SSR-periods. Further, I explore the role of the library and librarian as being a possible supplement or aide to the SSR-periods

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations. In this chapter I reflect on the study's findings and its limitations. I then provide possible recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

### 2.1 Conceptual/Theoretical Framework:

#### 2.1.1 Sociocultural Perspective on literacy

*“Although there is no single sociocultural theory on literacy, literacy scholars sometimes treat sociocultural perspectives on literacy as unified or interchangeable” (Perry, 2012: 51).*

Literacy studies have changed dramatically over the last few decades. Theoretically, moving from an autonomous model/understanding of literacy and what it means to be a literate person to a more ideological and context-centred understanding of literacy and literacy materials, the role of the teacher and institutions like schools have also undergone immense changes. For my study I will be focusing particularly on the sociocultural perspective on literacy (development) but before discussing this I think that it is worth first briefly detailing the literacy movements that preceded and led up to socioculturalist’s perspectives and the New Literacy Studies.

“[The social cultural perspective is] an inclusive term to refer to a body of research on learning and literacy learning that has been characterised as sociocultural theory, socio-cognitive theory, and social construction perspective as well as particular studies that locate learning and literacy learning within a larger social and political context” (Dantas, 1998: 11). Following Street, the ideological framework therefore defines literacy as “a social practice grounded in social, historical, cultural and political contexts of use” (Baynham, 1995). That is, literacy is a construction of and is situated in (that is dependent on) its context or rather the context of its use. Street’s framing of literacy as ideological contrasts with what he calls the autonomous model [moved from above]. The autonomous model defines literacy as ‘a unified set of neutral skills that can be applied equally across all contexts’, (Street, 2003: 77). Following this approach, there therefore is no need to alter pedagogy or requirements of different individuals/students because the meaning of a text and therefore literacy as whole is context independent and more strongly, is universal. It is this autonomous model that posits literacy as simply a technical and neutral skill that dominates education policy and teaching in the classroom (Gee, 1991; Street, 1997).

Barton explains two key concepts for researching and understanding literacy as a context embedded social practice: literacy events and literacy practices. He is emphatic that literacy events are regular and repeated events in an individual’s ‘everyday life’. “Literacy

events are regular, repeated activities [...] Some events are linked into the routine sequences and these may be part of the formal and welfare agencies. Some events are structured by the more informal expectations and pressures of the home or peer group” (Barton, 2006: 9). (I think it is important to make note of the distinction made between literacy practices and literacy events. Literacy events are “activities where literacy has a role. Usually there is a written text central to the activity and there might be talk around the text’, whereas literacy practices are “the general cultural ways of utilising written language which people draw upon in their lives.” It must be noted though that literacy practices are not reducible to observable parts of literacy because “they also involve values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships” (Barton, 2006: 7-8)). Texts therefore do not have their own independent meanings outside of social/societal conventions nor do they have “*functions* independent of the social meanings with which it is imbued” (emphasis is my own; Barton, 2006: 12).

This ideological framework assumes that literacy is “a set of social practices that are historically situated; highly dependent on shared cultural understandings and are inextricably linked to power relations” (Street, 1985: 433). Literacy therefore is not “simply an individual cognitive activity, but is a communicative tool for different social groups with social rules about who can produce and use literacies for specific uses.” (Larson & Marsh, 2006: 15) Literacy is no longer positioned as property or a skill of the individual but means/resource shared by members of a community that can only be realised through social relationships. (Barton, 2006: 14) New Literacy Studies also go one step further by highlighting the fact that literacy is a multimodal social practice with specific affordances in different settings/ contexts and therefore the understanding of what constitutes as a legitimate form of literacy (or rather what it means to be literate) changes depending on the context. (Further, Larson & Marsh, (2006: 16) comment that autonomous and ideological definitions of literacy do not stand in opposition to the other, rather each lies on differing ends of a continuum. Barton as well as Larson & Marsh summarise their (i.e New Literary Studies’) understanding of literacy (respectively) by means of the 6 propositions and 8 principles of NLS. (see figure A)

Table 2.1 Principles of New Literacy Studies

1. Literacy practices and events are always situated in social, cultural, historical, and political relationships and are embedded in structures of power (Barton, 1994; Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Street, 1995; 1997; 1999).
2. Being literate involves being communicatively competent across multiple discourse communities (Barton, 1994; Gee, 1996; 2001). Literacy practices and events are embedded in Discourses (Gee, 1996; 2001; Gee, et al., 1996) and are integrated into people's everyday lived practices on multiple levels (Gee et al., 1996).
3. Social inequalities based on race, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and so on structure access to participation in literacy events and practices (Barton and Hamilton, 1998).
4. Literacy practices involve the social regulation of text, that is who has access to them and who can produce them (Barton and Hamilton, 1998: 17; Luke, 1994).
5. The impact of new information and communication technologies changes the nature of literacy and thus what needs to be learned (Kress, 2003; Lankshear and Knobel, 2003a).
6. The changing nature of work also demands a new view of language that is multimodal (Kress, 2003) and more complex than traditional conceptions. The notion of multiliteracies emerges (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000). In other words, people use different kinds of literacy across domains of life (discourse communities).
7. Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices (Barton and Hamilton, 1998: 7; Gee, 2001; Street, 1995).
8. Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense-making (Barton and Hamilton, 1998: 7).

**Figure A (above): Table of the Principles of New Literacy Studies. (Larson & Marsh, 2005: 23)**

To reiterate, New Literacy Studies can be defined as what “represents a new tradition in considering the nature of literacy, focusing not so much on acquisition skills, as in dominant approaches, but rather on *what it means to think of literacy as social practice*” (emphasis is my own. Street, 2003: 77). Literacy practices and events are therefore always viewed as being situated/‘embedded’ in structures and institutions of power. That is, the autonomy of texts is questioned when using the framework of NLS, by means of questioning the “assumption that literacy in itself--autonomously--will have effects on other social and cognitive practices. Street positions the notion that Introducing literacy to poor, “illiterate” people, villages, urban youth etc. will have the effect of enhancing their cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their “illiteracy” in the first place” as a myth (Street, 2003: 77). NLS ‘debunks’ this view of literacy (and its power) by reiterating



the fact that because literacy practices are situated, they are wholly dependent on the contexts they are used in and therefore the effects of literacy can never be viewed as universal. “The autonomous approach is simply imposing western conceptions of literacy on to other cultures or within a country those of one class or cultural group onto others” (Street, 2003: 77). This ideological view of literacy corresponds with the first of Larson & Marsh’s propositions. (“Literacy practices and events are always situated in social, cultural, historical and political relationships and are embedded in structures of power” (Larson & Marsh, 2006: 23). All (literacy) events are therefore rooted in something (culturally) bigger specific to the individual.

Brandt and Clinton (2002) have critiqued the idea that literacy practices and events are restricted to a local context. They instead posit that there are “limits of the local” which very basically entails that literacy practices and their meaning can not be shaped entirely by the immediate context in which they take place (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). Brandt and Clinton, in trying to fully understand the practice of literacy, suggested “more attention be paid to the material dimensions of literacy” (2002: 337). Drawing on the work of Bruno Latour (1993, 1996), [they sought] to theorise the trans-contextualised and trans-contextualising potentials of literacy – particularly its ability to travel, integrate, and endure. Finally, [they proposed] a set of analytical constructs that treat literacy not solely as an outcome or accomplishment of local practices, but also as a participant in them. By restoring a ‘thing status’ to literacy, [they could] attend to the role of literacy in human action. The logic of such a perspective suggests that understanding what literacy is doing with people in a setting is as important as understanding what people are doing with literacy in a setting” (Brandt & Clinton, 2002: 337). Brandt and Clinton sought to situate literacy as being a part of a social practice and not just an effect or outcome of it.

Further, Brandt and Clinton provide a more fine-grained distinction between literacy events and literacy practices. Literacy events are viewed as being inconspicuous but detectable occurrences where as literacy practices are not necessarily noticeable but are long-standing and abstract events. This distinction between event and practice then allowed for those studying or rather observing literacy to focus on the individual and not only what they read and wrote but also, *where, how and why* they did it. Literacy, by means of this ethnographic approach, was now viewed as being a part of one’s daily life and social practices and not just a result of it (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). More so, understanding what literacy event participants do with literacy in a certain situation is just as important as understanding what literacy can do for them (Brandt & Clinton, 2002: 348). I think it is useful to take into ac-

count the NLS approach including that of Brandt and Clinton's as it allows me, as the observer or researcher, to "unpack how people use literacy in everyday life". (Larson & March, 2005: 21) By ethnographically observing and documenting the SSR-periods, one can come to understand what both student and teacher are doing in the classroom during that literacy event. "[Through] the 'pedagogisation of literacy', objectified conceptions of literacy are naturalised in practice. Pedagogisation is defined as the socially constructed link between institutionalised processes of teaching and learning and literacy. By reducing literacy to a 'neutral' set of reading and writing skills, literacy is defined apart from social context and becomes, then, a 'content to be taught through authority structures whereby pupils learned the proper roles and identities they were to carry into the wider world.'" (Larson, 1995: 440-441) Using the NLS (and limits of the local) approach is therefore fundamental. In moving away from the dominant discourse (surrounding literacy practices within the context of school) of knowledge and power, I am allowed to move away from allocating roles of authority or subscribing different roles to participants in literacy events, as well as ascribe my own ideas about what a particular space should be used for. As per Larson, one will probably find literacy (in this context) to be "[a] situated social practice, *in practice*" (emphasis is not my own; Larson, 1995: 440). Even though the SSR-periods take place in a classroom, using these literacy approaches as well as that of the 'third space' will help "[locate reading] in the social and linguistic practices that give [it] meaning" (Larson, 1995: 441).

### **2.1.2 Third Space Theories:**

The concept of 'Third spaces', has been used to describe and explore 'in-between' spaces within a wide range of disciplines and has been of particular interest to "those seeking to develop continuity between home and school literacies." (Levy, 2008: 44) There is the acknowledgement that at-home and school literacies differ. This dichotomous relationship of space results in differing activities and discourse. More than difference, there seems to be a discontinuity (be it through language, practices, culture or values) that exists from school to home and this places certain children at a disadvantage. The existence of multiple (literary) spaces grounds for there being multiple (literary) identities in one individual- identities that can often times create conflict because they can stand at odds to one another. Third spaces therefore are used to try and reconcile this by creating a space that moves away from fixed binaries (be they gender, class, home or reading cultures) and allows for all identities.

The theory of third spaces was not originally posited to be a pedagogical theory, rather it was a theory derived from literary and cultural studies and developed within postcolonial cultural studies which eventually leant itself to education theories. Homi K. Bhabha first conceptualised and defined the 'third space' in theorising culture and the role of power and the individual's identity within postcolonial/post-modern spaces,. (Rutherford, 1990) First deriving his understanding of hybridity and later third spaces from literary and cultural theories and applying them to identity theories, Bhabha in his 1996 chapter 'Culture's in-Between', interprets third spaces as being a cultural (note, not exclusively physical) space where individuals, particularly those who could be classified as being minorities, are given voice to express themselves without being constrained by any cultural traditions and expectations. (Bhabha, 1996) In these spaces there is an acceptance and perhaps even celebration of the hybridity of cultures which would usually not be acknowledged when regarding and following ethnocentric traditions. (Bhabha, 1994: 56) The enacting of diversification and the acceptance of cultural differences in third spaces, by this definition, is meant to be emancipatory. It is a reaction to the essentialist approach to culture, race and tradition as per modernity. In trying to further understand or rather define diversity within ethnocentric spaces, Bhabha propounds that the acceptance of hybridity and third spaces "problematizes the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and authoritative address' (1994:35) Third spaces can therefore be seen as transgressive and reconstructive when regarding spaces and especially identity. Bhabha in his articulation of hybridity and third spaces repudiates the long held assumption of there being clearly defined binaries (or borders) when regarding identity and culture. Instead, he emphasises the complex and forever changing nature of identity and culture.

Bhabha's ideas of transgression or not staying within certain borders links closely to those of Brazilian educator and critical pedagogy advocate Paulo Freire. In his 1970 book, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Freire writes about borders (both literal and metaphorical) and the re-visiting and crossing of them. He was particular about how borders can be oppressive to the individual and the formation of their identity and create a sense of alienation and feelings of being foreign/other should an individual either not fit into or conform to said borders. Freire, like Bhabha, understood 'border-crossing' as an act that had the potential to be emancipatory and crucial to consider when trying to redefine and refine pedagogical traditions and practices, and consequently one's identity within said spaces. (Freire, 1970) It must be reiterated that the binaries or borders that Bhabha and Freire refer to are not

solely physical or cultural ones and because when referring to spaces within said borders one can view them as sites where “maps of knowledge, social relations and values are increasingly being negotiated and re-written” by those who work within and cross said borders- border crossers so to speak. (Giroux, 2006: 51) It is clear from Bhabha’s theories of hybridity and third space, as well as Freire’s, that movement between spaces guarantees or rather instigates a change in identity and power and as such clearly illustrates the challenges an individual could potentially face when trying to navigate through and manage differing (and sometimes opposing) traditions, expectations and norms regarding practice when moving between spaces. Learning in and of itself can, in this light, be seen as a form of boundary crossing. When regarding the learning process in its entirety, that is the classroom and the traditional understanding of the role of student and teacher (the locus of control and therefore power typically being with the teacher), the knowledge used in the classroom (that is what is chosen to be taught within school spaces) as well as the materials approved and used in classroom settings, it is evident that the relationships and the process are hierarchical in nature. Deviating from these traditional boundaries, expectations and relationship dynamics can all potentially take place in the third space. It is no wonder that third space theory lends itself to pedagogy- especially when trying to understand the role of the student (taking into consideration their identities in the home and at school).

The concept of ‘Third spaces’, has been used to describe and explore ‘in-between’ spaces within a wide range of disciplines and has been of particular interest to” those seeking to develop continuity between home and school literacies.” (Levy, 2008: 44) There is the acknowledgement that at-home and school literacies differ. This dichotomous relationship of space results in differing activities and discourses. More than difference, there seems to be a discontinuity (be it through language, practices, culture or values) that exists from school to home which is more extreme for some children, placing them at a disadvantage. The existence of multiple (literacy) spaces grounds for there being multiple (literacy) identities in one individual. These identities may often times create conflict because they can stand at odds to one another. Third spaces therefore are used to try and reconcile this by creating a space that moves away from fixed binaries (be they gender, class, home or reading cultures) and allows for all identities. As was before mentioned, there are many different ways of conceptualising third spaces but for the purpose of this study, I will be focusing on Moje et al.’s (2004) approach as summarised in Levy (2008).

Moje et al. identify three ways of conceptualising third spaces within an educational context. Firstly, third spaces can be viewed as being “a way to build bridges from knowledges and discourse often marginalised in school settings” (Levy, 2008: 45). That is, third spaces in this context have a mediatory quality to them- you begin with where the students are in terms of knowledge and build on it. Students have a range of discourses available to them that do not necessarily stem from the school setting. These discourses are sometimes viewed as detractors from the school discourses and are therefore discouraged from being used. Third spaces deviate from this in that they view these differing and multiple discourses as being resources and a means to understanding the world. Third spaces therefore provide “the mediational context and tools necessary for future social and cognitive development” (Levy, 2008: 45). There is a bridging of discourses, so to speak.

The second conceptualisation of third spaces refers to them as more of a “‘navigational space’ providing students with the means to cross and succeed ‘in different discourse communities.’” (Levy, 2008: 45) Third spaces by this definition are again used as an aid or means of accessing academic discourse and knowledge. The final conceptualisation of third spaces differs from the former two in that there is challenging of the academic discourse. Third spaces by this definition can be determined as “a space of ‘cultural, social and epistemological change’ through which different funds of knowledge or discourses are brought into ‘conversation’ with each other ‘to challenge and reshape both academic and content literacy practices and the knowledges and discourses of youths’ everyday lives.” (Levy, 2008: 45) This conception moves beyond the idea of third spaces being an in-between one to them being a completely new space separate from the home-school dichotomy. There is a mixing of discourses and the challenging and reshaping of academic discourses to create new ones. “In this respect, third space theory is not being used as an intervention to promote continuity, but rather as a tool to help reach new conceptual understandings.” (Levy, 2008: 46) Gutierrez et al. in their conceptions of third spaces in their given context also pick up on the hybrid quality of third spaces when they say, their “analysis of third spaces has shown that learning contexts are immanently hybrid, that is, poly-contextual, multi-voiced, and multi-scripted” (Gutierrez et al., 1999: 287) Post-colonial theorist, Homi Bhabha, in his 1990 interview with Jonathan Rutherford reiterates this last conceptualisation of what a third space is, and does so in reference to culture, identity and differences. From these very brief descriptions it is clear that third spaces do not necessarily refer to far more than physical spaces. These definitions include behaviours around and

stemming from cultural beliefs and values as well as discourses and practices.

### **2.1.3 Classroom Discourse and Learner Positioning Theories:**

As per Bourdieu (and Cameron), language (and thus Discourse) is socially situated and dependent. Discourse goes beyond simply being language in use; it is also the way in which language creates, informs, constructs and propagates social order and the individual's interaction with society. With this in mind, I wish to return to the distinction Gee (1990) makes between discourse and Discourse(s) and why this is so.

Discourse (that is, *discourse*) is basically a series of utterances (that make sense). It is purely language (spoken or written). Discourse, with a capital 'D', is more than just language in use. Discourse(s) are means of interacting and integrating one's self with the world. "The term 'language ideologies' [and Discourse] is generally used (...) to refer to sets of representations through which language is imbued with cultural meaning for a certain community". (Cameron, 2003: 448) As such, Discourse is inherently ideological, as it takes into account the system of (socio-political) idea(l)s and beliefs of a particular society. "[Discourses] crucially involve a set of values and viewpoints about the relationships between people and the distribution of social goods (at the very least who is an insider and who isn't, but often many others as well). One must speak and act, and at least *appear* to think and feel, in terms of the values and viewpoints while being in the Discourse, otherwise one doesn't count as being in it." (Emphasis my own. Gee, 1990: 144) It is also important to further highlight the previously mentioned aspects of 'social power' related to Discourse(s). "Michel Foucault's (1972) view of [Discourse] as historically contingent cultural systems of knowledge, belief, and power does not require close attention to the details of linguistic form. Discourse analysis with a Foucauldian framework tend to consider instead how language invokes the knowledge systems of a particular *institutions*, such as medical or penal discourse." (Bucholtz, 2003 :45) There seems to be a valuing of not necessarily what is said but who says it (in this context- either the student or teacher), in what context (social and educational settings) and *how* it is said. Power therefore circulates amongst individuals in society that are able to master or rather correctly navigate and employ certain Discourses- the dominant Discourse of any society. Dominant individuals or groups, are able to maintain a sense of power and control through Discourse. Everyone outside of this group can be therefore be seen as the dominated or the other(ed), the latter because those who are able to successfully employ the Discourse of the dominant

usually legitimise their power and the hierarchical state of the society by means of normalisation or naturalisation. (Cameron, 2003 :452) “How people use words (and discourse of all types) to locate themselves and others” outlines positioning theory and shows how closely (inter-)linked Discourse theories and positioning theories are (Moghaddam & Harré, 2010: 2).

Positioning theory is theoretical approach that first was conceptualised by gender study theorists like Davies & Harré during the 1980s, and was presented as an alternative to the limiting idea of role (Davies & Harré, 1990). That is role, as per Harré, is static or fixed, whereas positions “permit us to think of ourselves as a choosing subject, locating ourselves in conversations according to those narrative forms with which we are familiar and bringing to those narratives our own subjective lived histories through which we have learnt metaphors, characters and plot” (Davies & Harré, 1990: 52). Positioning theory therefore allows for participants to position themselves and others to align with their beliefs, feelings and “knowledge of social structures (including roles) with their attendant rights, obligations and expectations” (Davies & Harré, 1990: 42). Positioning therefore is a much more fluid undertaking that allows for the dynamic and subject to change element of socio-cultural interactions and contexts. Positioning theory, most closely associated with the post-structuralist theorizing of subjectivity by Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré (Davies & Harré, 1990), is a framework used to broker the meaning of identity. First borne out of the problematic and limiting concept of ‘roles’, positioning theorists sought to move away from understanding or rather conceptualising the individual and their ‘role’ in any given context as being pre-defined and static. Participants in different social contexts and events are given some agency in that they are able to partially construct and manage their identities. As such, positioning theory was established as a post-structuralist means for understanding and theorising identity positions as interactively constituted. Although scholars have argued that identity is multiple and more fluid than simply determined by gender or social class, they also argued that identity is not completely free-floating. To avoid the limiting notion of identity found in the concept of roles, Davies & Harré developed the notion of positioning. The individual’s conception of self is “always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one’s own and other’ discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of own and other’s lives.” (Davies & Harré, 1990: 46) Identity, of self and others, is instead shown to be to some extent negotiable dependent on both context and narrative- which can at any point be used strategically or resisted

### **2.1.4 Sustained Silent Reading Background and Theories:**

(Uninterrupted) Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) is a method of independent reading first developed and promoted by Dr Lyman C. Hunt, Jr. in the early 1960's. SSR is also known as High Intensity Practice (HIP), Motivation in Middle School (MIMS), Free Voluntary Reading (FVR), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), and Daily Independent Reading Time (DIRT). Hunt's program, originally publicised as the 'Individualised Reading Program' was created to improve student's skills in regards to reading by means of becoming better individual readers without any input from their instructors or teachers. The Individualised Reading Program was comprised of six main principles- namely those of, silent reading, minimal guidance from the instructor, an enforced silent environment ('an atmosphere for productive reading'), development of reading skills and finally scheduled talks surrounding the texts students were reading during these reading times. (Hunt, 1971: 27) These principles or rather characteristics of the Individualised Reading Program were over time developed and honed into what is now known as Sustained Silent Reading Periods. As such, the whole objective of Sustained Silent Reading (or SSR as it will now be referred to for the remainder of this section) started as an initiative or rather method to try and nurture positive attitudes in students towards reading and in doing so improve (general) academic achievement. That is, develop students into "skilled, passionate, habitual, and critical readers" (Atwell, 2007: 17). A decade later the SSR project was initially instated in both primary and high school classrooms in North America and has since spread globally.

Although SSR has gained popularity over time and is generally an understood and utilised program in schools, there has not been much done in the way of investigating whether such programs have had a positive effect on student achievement (in regards to both reading and general academic performances). That is, the research literature surrounding the effectiveness of SSR-programs on improving academic achievement in the long term is limited (and dated, as the bulk of SSR research has taken place 15-20 years prior to this research) and was instead focused on the implementation of the program into classrooms and the potential benefits of it. The literature although limited, is not non-existent, as is the case with Jun-Chae Yoon's 2002 review of various SSR-programs.

Yoon's review, with the focus of the affective quality of SSR on the individual's attitude towards reading, found a positive effect on the individual's attitude towards reading, making



special mention of the fact that role-modelling (but non-interference) on behalf of the teacher in the class as well as the students being afforded the ability to self-select their reading materials (thus granting students agency) were the factors that most influenced the effectiveness of the SSR program in any given classroom (Yoon, 2002). Yoon's findings correlate with those of Moore, Jones and Miller's 1980 review of the literature available for SSR programs and their potential effects on reader attitude. Like Yoon, Moore et. al concluded that although SSR programs are beneficial to student's attitudes towards reading (even when the change in attitude is not evident to the reader themselves), more research needs to be done in terms of the long-term effects of such programs as well as better ways of measuring the effectiveness of SSR-programs (Moore et. al, 1980).

## **2.2 Literature Review**

### **2.2.1 Sustained Silent Reading**

Reading is an applied skill an individual acquires through repeated practice. More than just simply being an isolated skill an individual possesses, being able to read is an essential part of said individual's literacy development and can thus be viewed as a social skill and practice. That is, literacy and being able to read is not simply a cognitive activity an individual engages in but is also, and perhaps more importantly, a "communicative tool for different social groups with social rules [...]" (Larson & Marsh, 2006: 15). Failure to become literate can essentially denote an individual's failure to become an active member in certain social and, for the purposes of this review, academic communities. As such, reading and the ability to read is a highly valued, if not, essential, skill to have- especially in the classroom setting. With this, the requirement for ways in which to measure a student/reader's competency in regards to reading emerged and this resulted in the instating and popularisation of standardised tests of reading. However conventional these reading tests came to be there was, and still is, concern with the effectiveness in judging a reader's abilities or competencies. This is because the test results can only account for a very specific, dependent and calculated set of competencies in a student. That is, these reading tests (specifically 'criterion-referenced' ones) have observable results but these do not clearly represent reader accountability and attitude and the effects this may have on the individual's competency levels. (Schell, 1981).

Hunt and proponents of SSR-periods were aware of this gap in assessment of an individual's reading skills and the effects conventional reading periods and tests can have on the individual's motivation and therefore ability to read- because as was before mentioned, reading is a skill developed through practice. If an individual is not inclined to read, there is no way of improving their 'reading growth'. Hunt et. al sought to lessen the chasm between reader motivation and reader competency created by the traditional methods of reading instruction and assessment through the implementation and aims of SSR-periods.

As per Sadoski's 1984 article, 'SSR, Accountability and Effective Reading Instruction', the rationale of Sustained Silent Reading Periods is to "promote reading growth through allowing students to have sustained encounters with self-selected reading material without interruption in the presence of positive peer and teacher role models." (Sadoski, 1984: 119) It should be noted that SSR-periods are to be treated as supplementary to periods of reading instruction and assessment but can however be likened to traditional reading periods of instruction in that the skill or ability to read is highly valued and promoted. However, the literature on SSR-periods shows how the aims diverged from traditional reading periods of instruction in that reading was not viewed as a task for assessment or evaluation. That is, the act of reading is valued but not assessed. As such, student attitudes towards reading and more specifically SSR-periods and their effectiveness (if any) became the main focus of this review. Of the studies investigating the effectiveness of SSR-periods in regards to reader motivation or rather attitude I analysed for this review, the results for the most part showed SSR-periods to have a positive influence on student/reader motivation. (Bryan et. al, 2003; Holt & O'Tuel, 1989). It must be noted however that the 'success' of SSR-periods is dependent on a number of factors- I chose to focus on and later discuss only three of a variety of circumstantial factors. Namely, the individual's autonomy in terms of text selection; role-modelling or positive influence on behalf of either their peers or the teacher/school-official present during silent reading periods as well as the availability of resources (both in terms of print and genre of the texts the students are expected to read in SSR-periods). Additionally and finally, because this case study is focused on a grade 5 class, I tried to limit the literature to research that focused on primary and elementary learners, but have referred to a number of resources that investigate the effects of SSR-periods on secondary school (and older) readers too.

Included in my review, is the research of Bryan et al. (2003); Cline and Kretke, (1980); Dwyer and Reed (1989); Holt and O'Tuel (1989); Ivey and Broaddus (2001); Meyers

(1998); Moore et al. (1980); Nagy et al. (2000); Worthy et al. (1998); and finally Yoon (2002). As before mentioned, the individual's autonomy in terms of text selection; role-modelling or positive influence on behalf of either their peers or the teacher/school-official, as well as the availability of resources where the three main features or contributing factors identified of a successful SSR-period and helped promote reader involvement and enjoyment. This became evident when reviewing the afore mentioned articles and reviews.

Holt and O'Tuel as well as Cline and Kretke documented that there was an increase in positive student/reader attitude when individuals were given the opportunity to select reading material of their choice during SSR-periods. (1989; 1980) In Holt and O'Tuel's (1989) 10-week study of 216 grade seven and eight students who were, at the beginning of the study, at a reading level two or more years below their current grade level, the authors chose to split the group of students into two groups. The one group partook in a 20-minute long sustained silent reading period three times a week as well a supplementary sustained silent writing (SSW) period bi-weekly, while the other group of students continued with the traditional (and very much teacher structured) 20 minute reading periods daily. Additionally, the student/readers that partook in the SSR and SSW-periods were not required to read texts with any association with school texts usually allotted for their reading periods. The students were provided with a variety of materials including but not limited to novels, newspapers and magazines. The authors sought to determine if the SSR and SSW periods had any effect on the student/reader's attitude and perhaps even achievement. Using the Gates-MacGintie Reading test as well as the Estes Attitude scale (see appendix), Holt and O'Tuel found that the students who engaged in the SSR and SSW-periods' reading and writing attitude as well as achievement or ability positively (and significantly) increased. (1989: 290-297)

Similarly, Cline and Kretke's 1980 study found that the programme set up around SSR-periods in a Boulder, Colorado junior school had a positive effect on student/reader attitude. They observed two groups of students for three years- the former continued partaking in the school's already established reading program while the latter engaged in an SSR-period for the duration of the study. Cline and Kretke's study differed from the Holt and O'Tuel's in that students were allowed to choose whatever text they desired but were limited to either hard- or paperback fictional novels. Using a self-developed attitude scale as well as the SRA Assessment survey on Reading, Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Tests, a comprehensive test of basic skills as well as the Short Form Test of Academic Aptitude

test, the authors found that although the students/readers involved in the SSR-periods did not achieve significantly better in terms of assessment than their counterparts in the traditional reading program, they did experience a positive increase in reading enjoyment- especially because they were able to self-select their literature (1980: 503-507).

Self-selection of reading materials proving to be a motivation to read more and a factor in the improvement of student/reader attitude was also evident in Ivey and Broaddus' 2001 study of student opinion. The authors observed and surveyed 1765 grade six students and sought to find the motivating factors of reader engagement and enjoyment. After their surveys and interviews with the student/readers, Ivey and Broads noted that 63-percent of the students enjoyed and even preferred individual reading time. They also noted that 42-percent of the student participants felt that self-selection as well as having a variety of reading materials was a huge source of motivation for reading and enjoying it. Of those students, only 28-percent of them felt that they were able to access text materials of their choice in their classrooms (as opposed to the school library or from home for example). (2001: 350-377) Worthy et al.'s findings corroborated with those of Ivey and Broaddus in terms of the effect text availability can have on student/reader attitude. The authors found that because students were encouraged to bring in texts from home, they became more invested in SSR-periods and therefore their attitude towards reading improved significantly. (1998: 296-304)

A change in reader attitude differed significantly when the element of choice/self-selection was not present, as was the case with Dwyer and Reed's 1989 study. Observing and assessing a group of grade four and five students, the authors sought to find out what effect the student/reader's participation in a 15-minute daily SSR-period had on their attitudes and motivation towards reading. The students were again split into a group that partook in the already established, and traditional, reading period (with, it must be noted, an additional 20-minutes of reading time and instruction), as well as one that took part in an SSR-period. Unlike the previously mentioned cases, groups of students in this study weren't required to read school aligned materials. Using the Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment pre- and post-observation, the authors documented no real change or difference in the reader attitude amongst the two groups. (1989: 283-293) It is evident that self-selection as well as having a variety of materials can be viewed as beneficial to reader attitude when regarding SSR-periods and their effectiveness, acting otherwise (that is removing

the element of choice regarding text type for students) contravenes Hunt's original SSR-period plan and aims. (Nagy et. al, 2000)

Yoon's review, with the focus of the affective quality of SSR on the individual's attitude towards reading, found the effect to be a positive one on the individual's attitude towards reading, making special mention of the fact that role-modelling (but non-interference) on behalf of the teacher in the class as well as the students being afforded the ability to self-select their reading materials (i.e. agency granted to the students) were the factors that most influenced the effectiveness of the SSR program in any given classroom. (Yoon, 2002: 186-192) Cline and Kretke also noted the positive effect role-modelling can have on student/reader attitudes in SSR-periods. The students that partook in the SSR-period had a teacher who facilitated the process. The authors asked of the teachers present in the SSR-period to exhibit a sense of enthusiasm towards reading and partake in reading themselves during the period. It was found that the role-modelling had an affective quality on the students/readers as they positively responded to (and to an extent, mirrored) the teacher's actions and therefore did not view the SSR-period to be a chore or waste of time. (1980) Worthy et al.'s interviews with the teachers of the middle school students/readers revealed that the teachers found the SSR-periods to be impractical and difficult to initiate (be it because of the texts students were selecting for themselves were not helpful or rather useful in terms of instructional value or because of issues surrounding lack of time set aside for SSR-periods). Even so, the SSR-periods they could facilitate and the modelling they were able to demonstrate did prove to be beneficial. In fact, the authors noted that the teachers (through modelling and engaging with the texts available to the students/readers) were able to influence the text-type students/readers would select in an unobtrusive way and positively influence their attitudes towards reading. (1998: 296-304) It must be noted though that there is no fixed correlation between modelling and a positive increase in student/reader attitude towards reading, as documented by Dwyer and Reed. (1989) The authors found that the teacher present during SSR-periods facilitating these sessions by reading with the students acted as a hinderance of sorts as there was a decrease in the students/readers attitude and motivation. (283-293) It must be reiterated though that there are a myriad of factors that either contribute or detract from a successful SSR-period (and perhaps consequently student attitudes towards and engagement with reading).

### **2.2.2 Third Space in education**

For the purposes of this section of the review, I have chosen to focus mainly on Moje et.al (2008); Barton and Tan' (2009); and Wang (2004) as well as a later response-piece to Professor Stone (2007).

In research on third spaces within the educational/pedagogical context, there is a great emphasis placed on trying to give voice to the individual/student. Theories of third space make clear that there are changing and at times opposing historical, cultural and linguistic narratives and traditions that exist within different contexts. Acknowledging and accepting these narratives and therefore identities that exist within the individual/student are instrumental in (and perhaps even crucial to) developing a "continuity between home and school literacies" and therefore giving a sense of agency to the individual. (Levy, 2008: 44) Third spaces can therefore be understood as sites to dismantle and reform traditionally held conceptions of the individual and their identity especially in terms of power dynamics. Third spaces are sites where hybridity is of prominence and celebrated and this allows for the reformation of academic knowledge and identity while referencing and reassessing (traditional) cultural knowledge. (Barton & Tan, 2009: 50) Moje et al. touch on this understanding and further conceptualise third spaces within the pedagogic context in three ways. (Levy, 2008)

Firstly they define third spaces as being "a way to build bridges from knowledges and discourse often marginalised in school settings." (Levy, 2008: 45) Moje et al. are keenly aware that students have a myriad of discourses (and therefore identities) at their disposal and that these discourses do not necessarily stem from or act in accordance with those of the school setting. That is, because these discourses within the individual differ from those of the academic/school setting, they can often times be viewed as being detractors from the school discourse. Difference is often times postulated as being detrimental and is therefore discouraged so as not to distract from and diminish the academic discourse advocated for in school settings. In this context, third spaces are meant to act as a mediatory site- one in which the multiple discourses within the individual/student are treated as resources to refer to and rely on when trying to make sense of the school discourse and the world as a whole. Third spaces act as a site to bridge discourses that provide the individual/student with tools necessary for further social and cognitive development (Levy, 2008: 45). The second abstraction is very similar to the first in their treatment or rather understanding of third spaces as their viewed as 'navigational space[s]' for students to negotiate

within and succeed in differing discourse communities. (Levy, 2008: 45) The two concepts differ in that the former positions third spaces as being mediational and the latter as being supplementary to academic knowledge and discourses. Finally, the third conceptualisation of third spaces as per Moje et al. is that of “a space of ‘cultural, social, and epistemological change’ through which different funds of knowledge or discourse are brought into ‘conversation’ with each other to ‘challenge and reshape both academic and content literacy practices and the knowledges and discourses of youths; everyday lives.” (Levy, 2008: 45) This final understanding of the third space sees them as being sites separate from this dichotomy of school and home- they are instead completely new spaces that allow for exploration and transformation of the individual and their conceptions of their own identities, while also (perhaps most importantly) challenging and reshaping traditional academic (and cultural) discourses. The third space by this definition can be seen as being both the means of and ends to the individual finding themselves and their voices. Wang in her 2004 manuscript, “The call from the stranger on a journey home: Curriculum in a third space” reiterates this sentiment. Wang a Chinese woman living in America recounts her journey to finding her identity within and through Asian and Western philosophies and verse. In her explanation she defines the third space as being her reflection process of the often times difficult circumstances she faced in trying to reconcile her identity with her surroundings. (Wang, 2004) She writes further that the third space “does not reach consensus or synthesis but moves between, beyond and with the dual forces simultaneously. [...] [She] cannot emphasize enough that a third space is unsettling and never settles down. The third is not another version of the unified one but holds both unity and multiplicity.” (Wang, 2007: 390) Wang reiterates Moje et al.’s third understanding of the third space as being a complex, adaptable and dynamic site that affords the individual to reflect as well as both find and create their own *new* identities. The notion that the individual both moulds and is moulded by their surrounding cultural influences and the accompanying discourses is integral for this third conception of third spaces. “In this respect, third space theory is not being used as an intervention to promote continuity, but rather as a tool to help reach new conceptual understandings.” (Levy, 2008: 46)

## 2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced theorising of literacy as a context embedded social practice and my intention to research specific literacy practice of SSR as implemented and experiences in a Grade 5 class. I have also introduced theorising of the post-colonial notion of Third Space and or discursive positioning. I have reviewed empirical studies of the implementation and effects of SSR-periods as well as research on Third Space in pedagogical contexts. In the next chapter I will detail my research design and methodology.



## Chapter 3. Research Design

The purpose of this research is exploratory and I therefore felt that choosing a qualitative case study was the most beneficial. With this model I would be able to collect rich, “thick description” data (Geertz, 1973) in terms of the individual, the group, the participants material choices, motivations and any other factors affecting the SSR-periods as well as their effectiveness. I would also be able to establish a context. Thus, in this chapter I will elaborate on my choice of case study using an ethnographic approach by detailing the methodology and ethnographic tools (like observation and interviews) I used. I will also construct the context before delving into my methods of data analysis by discussing the participants of the study, the setting, data collection and any limitations I faced during and after the research period.

### **3.1 Methodology**

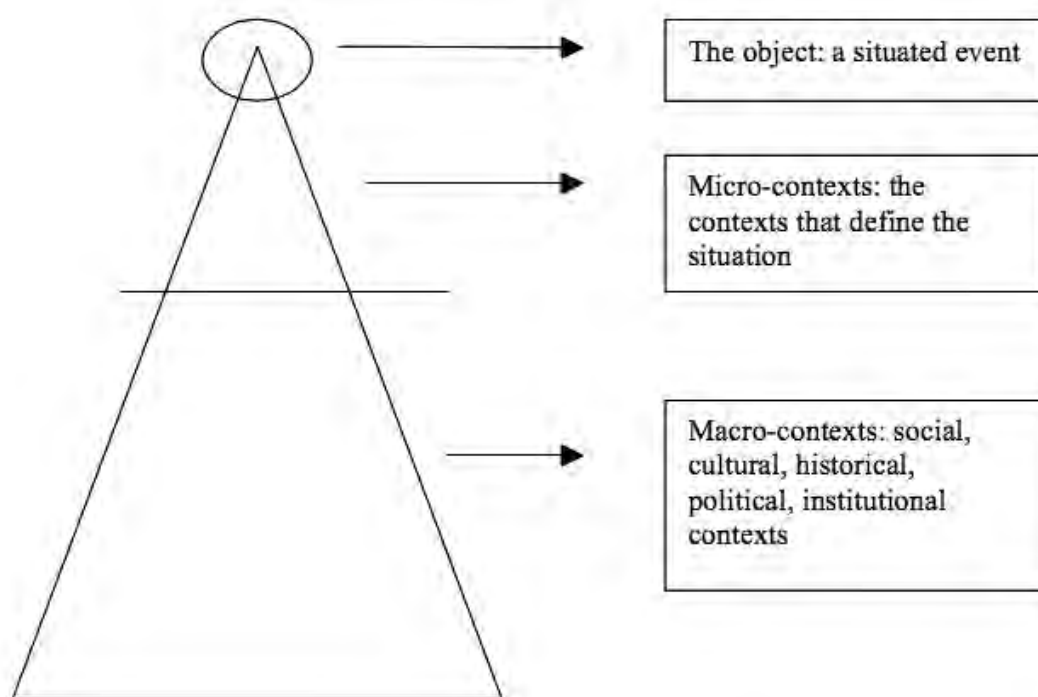
“A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” (Yin, 2003 cited by Farquhar, 2012: 5) I chose to do a case study as I sought to investigate what happens during SSR-periods in a grade 5 Western Cape classroom. Because little to no talking happens during SSR-periods, I am reliant on observations, interviews and surveys to create a context which is not immediately “clearly evident”.

Case studies, indeed most if not all qualitative work, aside from the manageability and achievability allows for an in-depth and unitary insight into specific situations or phenomena while contributing to the ‘science of the singular’. (Simons, 1980 as cited by Rule & John, 2011) That is, in focusing on a singular instance, case studies are particularly helpful in that they are not restricted by but can lend themselves to a more representative sample or theory and this is particularly helpful in the case of this potential study in that I am focusing on only one out of many factors that could possibly influence perceptions of reader proficiency. Essentially I am “[exploring] a general problem or issue within a limited and focused setting” and creating context. (Rule & John, 2011: 7);

Blommaert asserts that to understand and study any particular (literacy) event, the main focus is to “understand and study possible contexts in which your object will occur, micro as well as macro.” ((see Figure B) Blommaert, 2010: 21). Furthermore, the data collected in this case study will be analysed through both a sociocultural and ethnographic lens.

While one is not afforded the time usually associated with in-depth ethnographies (because this study is a small-scale one to be done in a limited amount of time), I feel it is worth adopting this lens as it affords me the opportunity to immerse myself in a given setting granting me access to both the seen and 'hidden' practices of the participants (thus, allowing for judgements). That is "the aim of case study research is not to make statements about the cases to a larger population but to explore in depth a particular phenomenon in a contemporary context." (Farquhar, 2012: 10) Ethnographies also typically are centred around participant observations garnered through being physically present in the environment and capturing field notes as well as interactions like interviews, and in doing so allows for the 'voice' of participants to clearly come through. This is of particular importance to my study because the findings are reliant on both the practices and views of the participants (especially the student participants) and I feel the most valid way of relaying these findings is through ethnographic means. Ethnographic work also places an emphasis on examining particular social phenomena in context over testing a hypothesis. As such, ethnographies necessitate working with 'unstructured data', that is, "data that have not been coded at the point of data collection as a closed set of analytical categories, investigation of a small number of cases (perhaps even just one case) in detail..." allowing for closer analysis and interpretation to take place- which is integral to a study of this nature. (Reeves, Kuper & Hodge, 2003: 512).

This study analysis comprises of a cross-cutting of the different sources of data which resulted in three key themes: the SSR period and students' experience of reading and Miss Gato's experience of conducting SSR-periods, SSR-periods as third spaces and thus reading in the environment of the SSR-period (in school) versus reading in the home environment.



**Figure B: Blommaert's conception of the (literacy) event that can only gain relevance or meaning when contextualised by the micro- and macro-contexts surrounding it. (Blommaert, 2010: 20)**

### **3.2 Participants**

This is a case study of Sustained Reading Period in one grade five classroom in a Quintile 5 co-educational school in the Western Cape over the period of a 5-day school week.

While I had originally wanted to study a grade 6 class as this is the testing age for literacy achievement tests like SACMEQ and the ANAs, I was only granted access to a class from the prior grade. I do not think this hindered or significantly changed the findings or observation as the entire school participated in SSR-periods and the students were experienced enough when it came to SSR-periods and thus were able to articulately form and express opinions about not only the SSR-periods but also about reading in general. The data was collected from the grade 5 students (by means of observation of 5 SSR-periods in their classroom, focus group interviews and questionnaires), their teacher (observation and interview) and the school's librarian (interview). I also conducted two interviews via e-mail with the librarians of Miv and Iring Primary School respectively. Both of these primary schools are in the same quintile as Cattus Primary school, have more or less the same demographic make up but perhaps most importantly also have scheduled SSR-periods. I

electronically interviewed both of librarians to gauge what students were reading and what the general reading culture (in their opinion) at the schools was.

In regards to the classroom of student participants, I wanted the class of focus to be selected from a public co-educational, Western Cape school. I also looked for a class where the boy to girl ratio in each was as close to 1:1 as possible to ensure that findings weren't altered or rather influenced by gender representation. The educational language and literacy policies (and even language policies and systems in general) as well as the distribution of wealth, and access in post-colonial spaces often times do not match the realities faced by the students they're made for and this certainly seems to be the case in South Africa- a multilingual, multi-cultural and economically-diverse/dissimilar country (SAQMEC III, 2011). That is, it is often times the case that you will have students from different cultural, economic and linguistic backgrounds/contexts in one space (the classroom) regardless of the school status (be it private or government, high or low-income). While accepting that these factors have an influence on students (and in this case, their literacy development and success), the only qualifier I had taken into account when selecting the class to study was that the class be one that has a sustained silent reading period, is comprised of intermediary-phased students, and that the school is English-medium, mixed-gender, public and situated in the Western Cape. The grade 5 classroom at Cattus Primary School fulfilled all these requirements.

Situated in a relatively affluent Western Cape suburb, Cattus Primary School (a former model C school), is a Quintile 5, co-educational school made up of a student body of 750 students. Currently (as per the school's website), the school racial demographic constitutes 11-percent black students, 36-percent coloured students, 10-percent Indian or Asian students and the remaining 43-percent of students are white. Although this is not an accurate representation of the wider Western Cape demographics, it must again be noted that Cattus Primary School is in an affluent area and because the distribution of wealth and access in post-colonial spaces, in this case South Africa, are often times not comprehensively carried out there is an (unfortunate) imbalance to be expected when regarding access, wealth and representation. In terms of the gender composition, 49-percent of the student body are males and the remaining 51-percent female. This proved to be ideal as it was as close as one could get to a 1:1 male to female ratio. The school caters for grade R to grade 7 students and the class sizes are typically comprised of 24-28 students. Most of the students at Cattus Primary School live in the surrounding suburb(s) but a small percentage of them travel daily from areas that are further out.

I also sought to observe and interview the students' class teacher, Miss Gato, to find out what her understanding of independent reading and the Sustained Silent Reading Period is; what she understood the purpose of these periods to be and finally what instructions or rules she put into effect for these reading periods. I view this as being integral to this case study as previous works have shown that a teacher can have an (affective) influence on a learner's (early) literacy developments and conceptions of proficiency (see McGeown, Goodwin, Henderson, & Wright, 2012; Florack, 2012; Leslie, 2012).

Finally, I also sought to interview the school's librarian to gauge what the children of that class are reading (that is genre and also media type), how frequently they are taking books from the library and whether or not they notice differences amongst the boys and girls with regards to the former two lines of inquiry. I also, as previously stated, conducted two interviews via e-mail with two other librarians from schools similar to Cattus Primary School that also had SSR-periods in place. Although this is a focused case study of one classroom during their SSR-period, I thought it useful to have a comparison in the types of materials students read as well as general reading culture to assess whether the events that took place at Cattus Primary were unique to the school and this group of grade 5 students or whether one could make links (albeit to a very limited degree) to the other schools and students.

### **3.3.1 Data Collection**

Because this is a case study using an ethnographic approach, and thus a qualitative study, I am afforded and perhaps am reliant on a number of data sources and methods of collection to garner information as well as ensure validity. The validity in ethnographic styles of research is enhanced by having multiple sources of data. "The data sought in case study research can be located with people, in action or practices (naturally occurring events), in various media such as documents, film or photographs, and in artefacts such as tools, clothes or buildings." (Rule & John, 2011: 63) As such, my data sources were individual interviews, classroom observations, a qualitative questionnaire given to the students that took part in the study and a focus group. (see Rule & John, 2011: 70-1) I employed the following strategies when collecting my datasets:

- A **preliminary observation session** with the students and their teacher. Following consent from the students, their parents and the teacher, I spent one lesson with the students to familiarise them with me and to therefore reduce the risk that any data collected in sessions following was not compromised by my presence.

- **Class teacher interview:** “Siedman (1998) sets out a style of interviewing which is particularly useful for case study research. He calls this in-depth interviewing. Siedman uses multiple interviews with a single person to achieve substantial depth. The first interview focuses on the person and captured life-history information, The second interview, [...] focuses on the phenomenon or experience at the centre of the study.” (Rule & John, 2011: 65) As such, I had originally wished to conduct two interviews (20-30minutes each) with the class’ teacher. “Interviewing has long been the most popular method in qualitative research” (Rule & John, 2011: 64), because they are a valuable source in establishing an individual’s beliefs and contexts in a personalised and relaxed manner. Because of time constraints, I was only able to conduct one formal 20-minute interview with the class teacher and have brief, unrecorded but noted conversations with her either before or after the SSR-periods. I entered the interview with predetermined questions to create some kind of standardisation in terms of enquiry but in a bid for the interview to be relaxed enough that the participant is afforded the space to be candid and elaborate on or bring up points they feel necessary during this discussion, I only referred to the questions as a guide for the conversation. (Rule & John, 2011) The interview acted as both a means to ‘get to know’ the teacher (discussion revolved around her teaching history, her beliefs surrounding literacy practices and a very brief reflection on her own practices during the SSR-period and whether or not she thought this had any influence on the ways she taught reading/expectations she had regarding reading habits). I also used the times we spoke outside of the observation period to ask more pointed and perhaps difficult questions (for example, I briefly enquired about how she defined proficiency and habits of proficient readers), as well as discuss who Miss Gato deemed to be the ‘better’ readers in her classrooms, how and why she came to this conclusion and what factors she thinks influence the reader’s success- in and out of the classroom with specific mention to the independent reading period.
- **School Librarian interviews:** I had a 15-minute interview with the school’s librarian. Having worked at the school for the past four years, she had a sound idea of the student’s reading habits and preferences. As such, I used the interview to gauge what the children of that class are reading (that is genre and also media type), how frequently they are taking books from the library and find out whether or not she noticed differences amongst the boys and girls with regards to the former two lines of inquiry. I also conducted two additional interviews via e-mail with librarians at school Y and Z, as they too (for the most part) were made up of similar demographics, also conducted SSR-periods and

did so in a similar way to Cattus Primary School. I did this to try and gauge what sort of literature the students at each of the respective schools were in engaging with, if there were any similarities or differences and what the consequences (if any) of either could be.

- **Classroom Observation during Sustained Reading Period:** Seeing as this is a case study using an ethnographic approach it was essential to incorporate observation as one of my sources of data. "Observation is the primary method of studies in anthropology", and allowed me (the researcher) to fully "capture and portray the liveliness and stiltedness of behaviour" by personally (but unobtrusively) encountering the participants in a certain context. (Rule & John, 2011: 67) For this study, I observed five, consecutive Sustained Silent Reading sessions. The first observation, as was before mentioned, was used to gain a general overview of the students' practices as well as familiarise myself with the students. The second through to fourth sessions were used to focus on particular students as well as take special note of what the students were reading (if they were reading) by means of written documentation as well as **photographs of books**. The last observation was used as a means of validating the data collected from the previous sessions.
- Observation allowed me to get a general idea of the participants' reading practices/habits, note the influence the teacher had on how the students behaved in the classroom during the SSR-periods, establish the implicit and explicit requirements and value judgements regarding certain acts (and perhaps even students) put forward by the teacher to the students, and finally to make note of the methods the teacher used in these sessions. Although I had hoped for more opportunities to observe the students, as was before mentioned time constraints did not allow for this (observation took place before the end of the second term's exams and as such I did not want to over-extend my stay or detract from the student's exam preparation time). I do feel however that I was able to collect enough data to analyse and draw conclusions from.
- **Focus Groups with students:** Because of limitations like time and space to conduct interviews, it was not feasible to interview the students individually. To overcome this, I conducted a focus group type of interview. "In focus groups the researcher engages a group of 6-12 participants together and facilitates a discussion among the participants." (Rule & John, 2011: 66) Originally I had hoped to conduct two sets of focus groups (30 mins in length each). The first acting as an introductory discussion and the second used

to elicit the students' specific viewpoints regarding the study's questions but because of the time limitations, I only conducted one focus group with 8 students- 5 of whom were boys. I had initially left the decision open to the students about who could join the focus group discussion, but because I only had a limited amount of time and space (the focus group was held in the library's 'reading' section away from the teacher so as not to influence the student's opinions), I decided to select the students who either displayed great enthusiasm towards the SSR-periods and reading in general, or who (by my estimation) did not enjoy or seemed disengaged within SSR-periods. I decided to purposively select the students as I felt that it would give me the most insight in terms of differing opinions. Like the teacher interview, I had a set of questions to initiate discussion and was in charge of facilitating said discussion but the power in terms of dialogue/discussion direction generally lay with the students.

I (audio)-recorded both interviews and focus groups and hand-wrote notes regarding the classroom observations. I think that audio-recording was useful as a means of not only verifying my notes but also capturing anything I may have missed during the different interactions. To add to this, the audio-recorder was discreet enough that it would not be as great a distraction as a video camera would. (It must be noted that all participants gave their informed consent for being recorded.) Also, all interviews and focus groups took place either in the classroom or library so as not to inconvenience anybody else.

In bringing together the different data sources in my analysis, I hope to reduce, if not avoid, the risk that the conclusions I draw from my data will "reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of specific method" thereby ensuring the "validity" of the explanations I develop in relation to the data. (Maxwell, 2008: 236)

### **3.3.2 Reflexivity and Limitations**

I am a young, black, South African, female originally from Johannesburg. I speak two of the official languages but am only proficient in English when regarding my writing abilities. I am an outsider (outside of this case study, I might never have come into contact with any of the participants, as well as not being native to the Western Cape and its culture) and am either significantly older (in the case of the student participants of the case study) or younger (in the case of Miss Gato and Mrs Ngeru) than the participants of this case study. Despite these factors and because my case study was so small-scale, anonymous and had no repercussions in terms of the findings, in my view the participants felt comfortable with my presence and were willing to share their feelings and thoughts without fears of



judgement. As the sole researcher with my only experience of SSR-periods being from the articles I had read prior to my research and one instance in a school I had previously completed my teaching training in, I am aware of the possible bias I may have when observing these periods. I am also cognisant of the possible power dynamics that may exist between myself and the younger/student participants. The limitations on time as well as the frequency with which I could observe or hold interviews or focus groups also proved to be challenging when collecting data and I am aware that these factors could act as potential hinderances to my case study. As such, I am hopeful that my selection of students, my in-depth field-notes, memos and audio-recordings help me in mitigating these possible shortcomings and help improve my objectivity when analysing the data.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

“Data analysis and interpretations constitute a critical stage in the research process which allows [one] to construct thick descriptions, to identify themes, to generate explanations of thought and action evident in the case, and to theorise the case.” (Rule & John, 2011: 75)

1. The observation data collected is the primary source of data I used to develop a description of the literacy practice of SSR as it was enacted in the Grade 5 classroom. I examined each literacy event to develop and understanding of the participants in-class reading practices and habits. As such the fieldnotes I made (comprising descriptions as well as my impressions and interpretations of the classroom setting, participants, activity and interactions) were used to “[generate] thick descriptions of the case.” (Rule & John, 2011: 82) That is, my observation notes were used to help me both establish the context/setting of each participating group as well as help contextualise the other sets of data.
2. I transcribed all the recorded interviews and focus groups discussions. Doing this made it easier to code the texts as well as compare them to my own notes made during the observation period. To ensure readability, I used a new line with every turn of speaker and used names or pseudonyms where necessary. I used the =/= to indicate overlapping speech or an interruption in speech. I indicated, using parenthesis, bits of the interviews that were in audible, and /.../ was used to signal a significant pause by the speaker. I also used the characters shown in Figure C (below) to mark pronunciation and intonation of words. Additionally when coding the transcript texts and observation notes, I highlighted instances when participants re-

ferred to the affective qualities of reading as well as positioning (of themselves and others) during literacy events (SSR-periods). I used these prominent instances to develop a kind of understanding of the participants literacy practices during the SSR-period. Further, I tried to establish or rather find any possible patterns that showed how their experience of the SSR-period and their positioning of self and others could be linked. From this I established and presented my analyses of the SSR-period, the library sessions and the possibility of there being a Third Space.

- . A period indicates a stopping fall in tone, with some sense of completion (but not necessarily the end of a sentence).
- , A comma indicates a slightly rising tone giving a sense of continuation
- ? A question mark indicates a rising tone which may (or may not) indicate a question
- ! An exclamation mark indicates an animated tone, not necessarily an exclamation
- : A colon is used to indicate to indicate a stretched sound and is placed after the stretched vowel.

**Figure C: The characteristic of speech delivery as per Atkinson and Heritage (1986).**

3. Because language and literacy learning are sociocultural activities or processes situated and constituted within social and cultural events or practices, the data is analysed using a sociocultural lens, specifically the NLS framework (Barton, 2006, Larson & Marsh, 2005), focusing on literacy practices and events as well as touching on the embodiment of reading.
4. When analysing the actual space of the Sustained Silent Reading period and the activities that take place there, I draw on post-structuralist theories of Third Space (Bhabha 1996, Moje et al, 2004) and positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990). This I think is useful when trying to identify and possibly differentiate between in-school and at-home literacy practices and whether periods like this dedicated to independent reading can be a way of bridging this gap and therefore positively affecting the individual's literacy development.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

The following ethical rules were applied:

- I received permission from the WCED (Western Cape Education Department) to conduct observations, interviews and collect data from Cattus Primary School.
- I submitted a copy of my research proposal to the principal and the Intermediate Phase Head, and the parents of the learners (as they are minors) were asked to sign consent forms regarding their willingness to participate. All information sheets and consent forms emphasised that participation in the study is voluntary and without any incentives. Blank copies of each of these forms are to be found in the appendix section. All parents and students consented to participating in the study (see Appendix 1-4).
- Any and all information of a personal matter was treated in a confidential manner. As such,
- I protected the identity of the learners, teacher, librarian and the school by using pseudonyms. Any identifying information was removed from my records.
- As the researcher, I was sensitive to the possible power that I might hold over child participants being both an outsider and an adult.
- I made sure to treat the participants of this study fairly and equally during the course of my case study.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter I gave an overview of the case study and research design, I introduced the study's participants and the sites of data collection. Additionally, I outlined the manner in which I organised and analysed the data, especially in regards to prevalent and reoccurring themes. In the next chapter, I will be presenting and analysing the collected data for the case study.

## **Chapter 4. Data Description, Presentation and Analysis**

I begin this chapter with an introduction of the school context and then outline the routines of the SSR-periods. I go on to present the class teacher, Miss Gato, and what she does during said periods, as well as her feelings surrounding reading and reading in the SSR-period. I present two contrasting cases of the construction of a 'reluctant' and 'good' reader and their enacting of each of these identities. Finally, I present the school's librarian and explore how her library sessions possibly have the capacity to be a third space for the students.

### **4.1 Data Description**

#### **4.1.1 Context:**

Cattus Primary School (a former model C school), is a Quintile 5, co-educational, English-medium school made up of a student body of 720 students and situated in an affluent Cape Town suburb. According to the 2011 census, the 14591 residents in this part of the Western Cape is made up of 16.5- percent black Africans, 62.7- percent white Africans and 9.6-percent coloured Africans. In this area, 92-percent of those aged 20 years or older have completed their matric certification or higher and 95-percent of the labour force are employed, with the majority of the households earning R12800 or more per month. At the time of fieldwork, the school's racial demographic constitutes 11-percent black students, 36-percent coloured students, 10-percent Indian or Asian students and the remaining 43-percent of students are white. Of the 720 grade R to seven students present, 49-percent of them are males. Although Cattus Primary is not representative of South Africa on a broader demographic scale, it is typical of schooling at the elite end of the public schooling continuum, collecting school fees of over R30 000 per annum.

Even though the school demographics do not exactly line up with those of the Western Cape in a more general sense, the school's language policy accommodates the three dominant languages of the Western Cape. Cattus Primary is an English-medium school with Afrikaans taught as a first additional language and basic level isiXhosa offered throughout the primary grades. Cattus Primary School has both a picturesque setting and a multitude of amenities- during break times the student body have access to large sports and playing fields. Notable for the focus of this research, children also have access to the school's comprehensive library which hosts a variety of not only genres but languages, and the students have the choice of books from either an English, Afrikaans or Xhosa section. Once the school day concludes, students are able to take part in a range of extra-cur-

ricular activities, both 'cultural' and sports orientated. With a variety of extra-curricular options to choose from, be it dance classes, rugby, drama club, chess, cricket and gymnastics (to name but a few of the many after-school activities), the students of Cattus Primary are considerably exposed to more than students who are in lower quintile Western Cape schools. It can in summation be described as an elite public school.

As part of my fieldwork, I spent time with a grade 5 class, their teacher and the school's librarian. The class, like most of the classes in the school, is (when compared with the average South African school) relatively small and made up of 23 students- of those students, 13 are boys. The racial demographic of this particular class of 11-12 year old students differed from those of the school- approximately 83-percent of the students were white, English first language speakers. Each of the four students who did not fall into the afore mentioned bracket represented each of the other racial groups in the school (that is there was one black student, one coloured student, one Muslim-Indian student and an Asian student), but like their classmates spoke English as their first language. (It must be noted though that because the students were proficient in reading, writing and speaking in English as a first language, this is not to say that they were all monolingual or came from monolingual backgrounds).

Through conversation with the students I learned that they were all very familiar with each other with the majority having not only been in Cattus Primary since grade R but also being in the same registration class as each other sporadically through the years. This was, however, the students' first time being taught by their current teacher (who for the remainder of this study will be referred to as Miss Gato). Although a teacher at Cattus Primary for the last seven years, prior to being this grade 5 class' registration and mathematics teacher, Miss Gato was an intermediate phase English teacher (Formal interview 1, Appendix 9: 2018). Although the research on literacy, achievement and the gender gap in performance has been focused on grade 6, as this is the testing age, I thought a grade 5 classroom was useful and of great significance in it's own way. Firstly, there is a paucity of research on literacy practices, whether in elite or typical South African schools at this grade level. Secondly grade 5 students, in terms of their age (10-11 years) are often times on the border in relation to literacy and literature provided for them,. That is, grade 5 students are recognised as being neither lower primary, but not yet at the level of senior primary (that is grade 6 and 7). As Miss Gato explained in our interview:

“Grade 5 is also a tricky year, grade 6 is an easier year for reading. Grade 5 is a tricky year because the kids aren’t children and they’re not yet adults, and it’s a very difficult year to find books. Some of the books, the content is too advanced for them but the quality of the vocabulary /.../ So, the quality of the vocabulary is too advanced but the story is probably right for them and other books you have the exact opposite where the vocabulary is quite babyish but that’s all they can understand. So it’s a difficult year which is why I think you’ve seen such a variety of books in the classroom. Grade 6 is an easier year because I think the children are that much more mature, especially in this school. So they are reading young adult books, so there’s a larger variety of books. I think the librarian has also said that [after questioning about what kinds of books grade 5’s read] grade 5 is such a difficult year. It’s such a difficult year to try and pitch it and where to pitch it, so I mean we’ve got on our reading list we’ve got books that some grade 3’s would read and we’ve also got books that some grade 6’s and 7’s would read, so it’s where to pitch it.” (Turn 22, Appendix 9: excerpt from the interview with Miss Gato)

The repeated descriptors “tricky” and “difficult” Ms Gato uses emphasises her perception of the challenges in identifying age-appropriate reading material for the children in Grade 5. There is an expectation of what Grade 5 students should be able to read at this level, yet there is (as per the class teacher and the school’s librarian,) little in the ways of literature that is provided for them or *deemed appropriate*. This particular year of study can be seen as being the in-between but incredibly crucial year for students- in terms of achievement but also in more general terms of the development of reading habits and enjoyment. Even though Miss Gato has not taught most of the students in the class before the current year, she has managed to build a rapport with her students. During my observations it was not a rare occurrence for the class teacher to be greeted with a hug in the morning from one of her students, or for the class to participate in anecdotes about the ‘school cat’, and they are well aware of what was required of them in terms of discipline and work ethic. I was able to observe the class during their SSR-period for five consecutive lessons over the period of a week. The end of term exams were to commence the week following my presence but this did not alter my observations as SSR-periods took place as per usual, I was informed. I focused on Mrs Gato’s SSR-periods and practices as key literacy events with the potential to represent third spaces and foster reading for pleasure amongst students.

#### **4.1.2 Physical Environment and Resources:**

The physical classroom is located approximately 20-metres away from the school’s library. On my first day, and after the initial introductions to the students and alerting them of the

school week's observation I was able to enter the classroom space before the students in the morning and select my position to observe from. Once inside the physical classroom, and after admiring the comprehensively stocked bookshelf and advanced projection board and equipment at the front of the classroom, I was struck by the amount of colourful and vibrant posters on the classroom walls. Beyond the generic 'Hang In There'-cat poster, there was an array of not only mathematic but also *English literature and language* posters and guides. This space, outside of it being well-equipped in terms of school furniture and reading materials and multimedia, was an environmental print- and literature-rich one. Environmental print is the words and images that surround us in our everyday environment, which in this case is Miss Gato's classroom (McMahon & Wellhousen Tunks, 2010; Neumann et al., 2011). When regarding early childhood literacy development and subsequent reader capabilities and motivation, the role of environmental print and resources is shown to be a crucial (and at times, overlooked) one. Often times an individual's first encounters of the written language is through environmental print. Environmental print helps provide the individual with a solid foundation in early literacy skills by helping them foster their meaning making skills and is thus potentially crucial to their success in learning how to read (McMahon & Wellhousen Tunks, 2010; Neumann et al., 2011). In terms of this particular context, the role of environmental print may need to be reconsidered. The students are no longer in the early developmental stage of literacy. The print and literature available to the students served the multi-purpose of decorating the workspace of the students, either providing information on topics covered in class or displaying the students' understanding of the work covered, as well as serving as an incentive to read or engage with the work and/or literature available to them in the class. This classroom, and the school, has at a surface level all the components of an environment that would provide for and foster literacy and meaning making skills. That is, there is an abundance of reading materials (in the form of traditional literature in book form as well as environmental print), well-built and decorated facilities as well as a general protocol in terms of having a time in the day for sustained silent reading.

As per said protocol, the first bell of the day rings at 07h40. It is between this time and 07h45 that the students are meant to line up outside of their respective registration classes and get settled. After the initial chatter and subsequent calming down of the class' high energy from their morning play with each other, the students are then usually instructed to take part in the SSR-period for what is meant to be 20 minutes of the day. Although the SSR-period is a mandatory one for every class in Cattus Primary, what happens in said

period is at the discretion of the register-teacher. My study though is limited to what is enacted and experienced in one particular grade 5 classroom. After the SSR-period, the school day commences as normal with the students either moving to another classroom, or staying should they have a mathematics lesson with Miss Gato.

## **4.2 Data Analysis (Findings)**

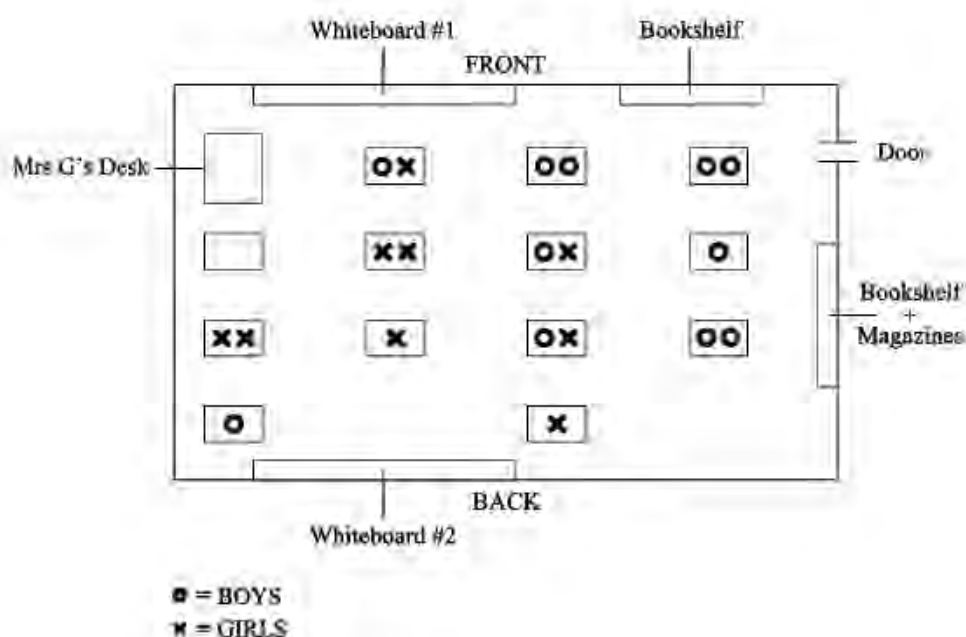
### **4.2.1 The students' and Miss Gato's experience and enactment of reading in the SSR-period**

Looking at the classroom on the first day of observation (and for the following four), the classroom is set up much in the way a traditional classroom would be. That is, Miss Gato's class had more than adequate facilities (tables, chairs and learning resources), a good structural environment (the windows, lighting and heating were all in great condition) and everything was set up in a manner that by most research literature would promote learning and 'instruction' (that is, students were initially sat in rows but then moved to small groups during the period of observation) (Cheryn et. al, 2014: 7). The classroom, situated on the ground floor (and around the corner from the courtyard surrounded by trees and ample space for the students to play in and socialise) is big, spacious but still warm and well-lit- a fact one became acutely aware of once stepping inside the classroom outside of the cold and grey winter's day. Once the students had entered the classroom and 'thawed' themselves readying for the SSR-period to take place, Miss Gato closed the door and the classroom became insular in the sense that the outside ceased to exist- the big and cheerfully decorated classroom door blocked out all outside winter chill and noise and the only interruptions to the silence came either from Miss Gato (through instruction), her students (when turning the pages of their books or readjusting their seats) or the odd intercom announcement from the office administrators.

The physical classroom had two 'whiteboards'- the first at the front of the class being the newer model electronic smart-boards that Miss Gato uses both for teaching (the board functions in the traditional sense of the blackboard as well as a means for projecting additional worksheets and resources on) as well as showing videos (as was the case on the final day of my observing the class). The second, situated at the back of the classroom, can be described as being the traditional blackboard (much like the ones that might be found in less affluent classrooms) that is used by both students and Miss Gato during the maths lessons she conducts for the remainder of the school day. There are two book-



shelves each with an assortment of literature ranging from the expected textbooks and works of fiction to 'National Geographic Kids' magazines covering an assortment of topics. Each shelf, whilst also being 'well-stocked', is kept in very good condition- none of the books bore any markers of wear and tear or neglect. Although, initially, none of the students took any books from either of the shelves on my first day of observation, it was made clear that they were free to get a book *on the condition* that they either didn't have a book with them already or had finished the current book they were reading- a point one will return to later (Interview with Miss Gato, Turn 20, Appendix 9; 2017). As was before mentioned, the students at the outset of observation sat in traditional rows or columns with all of the seats facing towards the front and thus Miss Gato. This style of seating, as per Sommer, lends itself to "sit-and-listen" style of teaching where the teacher is the dominant voice in terms of classroom discourse and authority (Sommer, 1977). But during the course of the week, the seating changed into smaller groups and a number of desks lined along the side of the classroom with students facing either each other, the wall or windows. This style of seating, promotes task-sharing and group work and was a new addition to the SSR-period (Sommer, 1977). Miss Gato revealed that "the structure of the desks in rows and everything else is quite... limiting, and so to make more space in the classroom that's why I've shifted all the desks to the side of the classroom so that we have more time to sit together." (Turn 17, Interview, Appendix 9) The seating set-up went beyond just that of the SSR-period and Miss Gato was keenly aware of the possible positive effects group-learning and collaboration can have on student achievement, another point I will return to.



**Figure 1 (above): The classroom set-up of the SSR-period on day 1 of observation. Even though there were 23 participants, 3 participants were not present for the duration of the SSR-period either due to tardiness or absenteeism. Present students were seated next to their assigned partner from the previous week, in rows facing the front of the classroom.**

Before I had observed the class during the SSR-period, I had no expectations both in terms of classroom set-up/space as well as how every reading session would play out e.g. whether SSR periods followed a similar routine. Despite trying to remain impartial, I did however through observation begin to think of and observe the reading period as possibly being an opportunity to go outside of home and school literacy contexts. As such, I began to look for ways in which the SSR-periods in this classroom afforded themselves to being a space of hybridity (Gutierrez, 1999) and ways that it didn't. This led to analysing the SSR-period through the lens of Third Space theories (Moje et al., 2008 , Gutierrez, 1999)- a subject I will discuss at greater lengths in the latter part of this section.

For the entirety of the time I spent observing the students (save for one SSR-period), their conduct upon entering and beginning the SSR-period was consistent. The Grade 5 class, all between the ages of 10 and 12, after lining up on either side of the hallway outside the classroom (boys to the left and girls to the right) would quickly and quietly enter the classroom in a uniform manner- with the girls heading in first. The students would then sit at their respective and designated seats and take out a book to begin the SSR-period. (see figure 1 above) Because every SSR-period I observed began in much the same prescriptive and orderly way, I surmised that the students were well-versed in what was expected of them. Each of the students would sit at the desks with their books in front of them, and they sat incredibly quietly- the silence only shattered by intercom announcements, the clacking of Miss Gato's keyboard and the occasional prompt from her to either 'read' or 'be quiet'. At first glance this SSR-period bears all the markers of a successful or even conventional one as per the literature on what constitutes an SSR-period, that is a preliminary observation of the grade 5 classroom abides to the 8 basic principles of an SSR-period: the first being "access- materials in a variety of formats are provided for students". The remaining seven principles are "appeal; environment; encouragement; staff training; non-accountability; follow-up activities and distributed time to read" (Poser, 2006: 33). The classroom stood in stark contrast to the cold grey day outside, it was *very* quiet, well-lit,

warm but not stuffy- a suitable and comfortable environment both in general and in terms of learning and working. The students had a range of materials in a variety of formats to read both within (the bookshelves) and outside of the classroom (the library) that they were not graded on. They were constantly reminded to read by Miss Gato (who spent the lesson at her desk reading from either her computer or the papers on her desk) and were allocated the remainder 20 minute period to read. But upon closer inspection I noticed a few differences between the superficial construction of an environment conducive to SSR and practices I observed.

Extract 1 Day 1 Fieldnotes (19/06/2017, 07:40am)

Seated at her desk in the anterior corner of the classroom, much in the way a guard would sit in their watchtower, Miss Gato has an almost strategic view of the classroom. From her (raised) big desk she is able to see all the students as they, on the first day at least, sit in rows that all face her desk and she is able to see both on and under their desks. Miss Gato has (for a variety of reasons both personal and external) taken on the role of enforcer and not necessarily that of modeller in the SSR-periods. After her initial one-worded prompt for the students to stay on task on the first day of observation ("Read!"), she looks up again from the computer and does a hawk-like scan of the classroom 3 minutes later to maintain silence. Thirteen minutes into the SSR-period, she notices one of the boys at the back of the classroom not reading but writing; she directs a stern warning glance in his direction and [the student] almost expecting his wordless reprimanding immediately puts down his pen and returns to reading the book he had initially taken out. Satisfied that everyone appears to be on task, Miss Gato returns to looking at her computer screen. Later I find out that on this particular day she is working on attendance registers as well as planning the week's maths lessons and requirements thereafter. For the rest of the field-work period, Miss Gato (when in the class and at her desk) busied herself with either marking tests, sorting out school events or general registration tasks.

It must be noted that Ms Gato explained to me that this twenty minute period of the day was the only time she had to complete administrative tasks required of her. During our interview Miss Gato lamented the fact that although she is technically reading during this period, she isn't afforded much time to read for pleasure and more so to model reading for reading's sake in front of her students.

“I think we try and use the SSR-period as an admin period slash reading period slash everything, whereas if you have it for example after break where they’ve come in quite wild and you need to calm them down, I think that would be a more optimal time of the day. But the CAPS curriculum is so huge and there’s no time to do it as a separate, so it’s the best alternative to do it (this way) and try fit it in. To fit it in we have taken two minutes off of every lesson to try and fit the silent reading period.” (Turn 16, Appendix 9)

It is immediately clear, both from my observation and interviewing Miss Gato, that factors of time affect the function of the SSR-periods. Ideally, SSR-periods are a time allocated to pleasure and only reading *on the terms of the students* but limited and fractured time has had an effect on the appeal, environment, teacher encouragement and therefore functioning of the SSR-periods in ways I will now discuss.

Firstly, SSR-periods are meant to be used solely for both the students’ and teacher’s reading for pleasure but upon observation I noticed that they have instead been co-opted into an amalgamation of SSR- and administration-periods. I used the word ‘co-opted’ because it has become such by the implicit agreement of the teachers, students and school in general. It seemed to be the case that it is taken for granted that SSR-periods can function both for silent reading and as administrative periods. It seems to be that a kind of trust is vested in the students that they will read (and only read) and teachers are in turn given the responsibility of maintaining the peace and completing their work before the ‘official’ school day begins. Although this set-up could potentially fall in line with differences and diversity afforded to third spaces as being hybrid spaces where a multitude of literacy events can take place, one has to wonder whether this set-up deviates too far from the original principles of the SSR-periods and thereby detracts from the period’s effectiveness. Further, every SSR-period began at different times ranging between 7:40-7:55AM (Appendix 10). This is quite a large gap between times and is caused by external influences, a point I will return to later. Because of the time constraints and multi-functioning role of the SSR period, it further begs the question if any ‘real’ reading can get done in these periods and their overall effectiveness. What can and what does happen in these SSR-periods?

My observations over a week showed that students are very much familiar with the routine and what should happen during the reading periods- the routine being, walk into the classroom, take their jackets off, take their books out and read in silence for the remainder of the 20-minute period while Miss Gato went about completing that day’s admin. As was before mentioned, during my first observation the students sat in relative silence with their

individual books in front of them. They were (on that day and the subsequent sessions) routinely called upon by Miss Gato to answer for attendance registers or other administrative concerns but generally it seemed they were left to their own devices. That is not to say they were not monitored by their teacher. Students were shushed or told to read but there was, in my opinion, no real encouragement on two levels. Firstly, because the SSR-period was so part of their routine, some students took for granted that it was an administrative period and that simply 'appearing' to read was enough.

This interpretation is illustrated by the case of student 11, a girl in Miss Gato's class who caught my attention during observation.

#### **4.2.1.1 The Positioning of Student 11 as a Reluctant Reader.**

A tiny, fair-haired and soft-spoken girl who was well-liked amongst her peers, student 11 had also been identified as one of the 'poorer readers' in the class by Miss Gato during one of our many 'go along conversations' (Kusenbach, 2003)- the type, in her opinion, who didn't "benefit" from the SSR-periods because of her inability to partake in the period (and perhaps general reading tasks in the context of school) in the manner of other students that she deemed stronger readers (Appendix 9, turn 14). Student 11, like most of her peers in her class, was a white, first language English speaker.

Extract 2 Day 1 Observation (19/06/2017; 07:46)– "Student 11's performance of 'reading'".

Student 11, exactly like her fellow students, enters the class in the organised manner expected. Following routine, she settles in to her seat at the front of the classroom (which may have been positioned so that Miss Gato could keep a closer eye on her). She takes out her book: Kate DiCamillo's widely acclaimed fantasy book "The Tale of Despereaux" but then discreetly and strategically deviates from the norm. Student 11 at this point proceeds to not open her book but place it at the corner of her table and then bends her shoulders forward and drops her head, obstructing the view of her table and her face. It would only be upon very close inspection that one would notice that she wasn't reading as she has the hunched over posture usually attributed to someone engrossed in what they are reading. Around ten minutes into the twenty-minute period she opens her book and flicks through the pages, pausing to browse for a few seconds before turning the page of her book again.

Extract 3 Day 2 Observation (20/06/2017; 07:51) - "Student 11's performance of 'reading'".

The Grade 5 students begin the SSR-period on day 2 later than the previous day because of an administration issue that had to be sorted out before the commencement of any reading. Student 11 in my short time observing her, seems to begin the SSR-period in a habitual manner. Like the previous day, she is silent and discreet. She produces the same fantasy novel as the previous day and places the closed book in the centre of her desk. Perhaps because the SSR-period has begun at a later time or because Miss Gato is more vigilant on this day, having caught two boys passing notes shortly after the beginning of the reading period, student 11 opens her book randomly soon after taking it out of her backpack and placing it on her desk. She then proceeds to assume the 'reading' position- that is, she hunches her shoulders forward, drops her head and 'reads'. During this SSR-period (the session ends at 08:16), student 11 turns the page twice. Once at 08:05, when Miss Gato makes the announcement to the class that the students who need language support are to leave the classroom and again at 08:13- less than a minute after Miss Gato chides one of the students for whispering to her friend and not reading. Student 11 then quietly packs her book away at the end of the lesson and awaits further instruction from her teacher about the Afrikaans lesson that will follow.

Extract 4 Day 4 Observation (22/06/2017; 07:45) - "Student 11's reading".

Typical of a Western Cape winter's day, day 4 is cold and very wet. As such, although the SSR-period begins on time, the majority of the students have been caught in traffic and are late to school. Before the start of the period, the students line up as is customary, the difference being that there are only 5 students present. Throughout the period, students filter in to the class and partake in the SSR-period trying as best as they can to not create any distraction or noise for their classmates or teacher. Student 11 is one of the late students, arriving with 9 minutes left of the period. Miss Gato, possibly because of the infrequent arrival of the students, as with the previous days of observation focuses her attention on administrative tasks but unlike the other days is lenient with *what and how* the students read. Student 11 is one of four students who gets something to read from the class bookshelf and not her bag. Student 11 chooses one of the National Geographic magazines available in the classroom. She quietly sits at her desk and appears to be actually reading and not merely performing the act of reading. She continues reading uninterrupted until the session ends at 08:07.

Because student 11 either performed reading, lost concentration or in one instance read avidly during the SSR-periods across the five days of observation- she was chosen to be a part of the student focus group. I initially began with the preconception that the young girl did not enjoy reading or was perhaps, as she had been positioned by her teacher, indeed a poor reader, but from the focus group conversation as well as the written questionnaire and an instance during observations I found that this was not at all the case. Student 11, Miss Gato and each of their experiences of and during the SSR-period raised the key issue of positioning and identity and the effect it can have on an individual during social practices/literacy events- like the SSR-period.

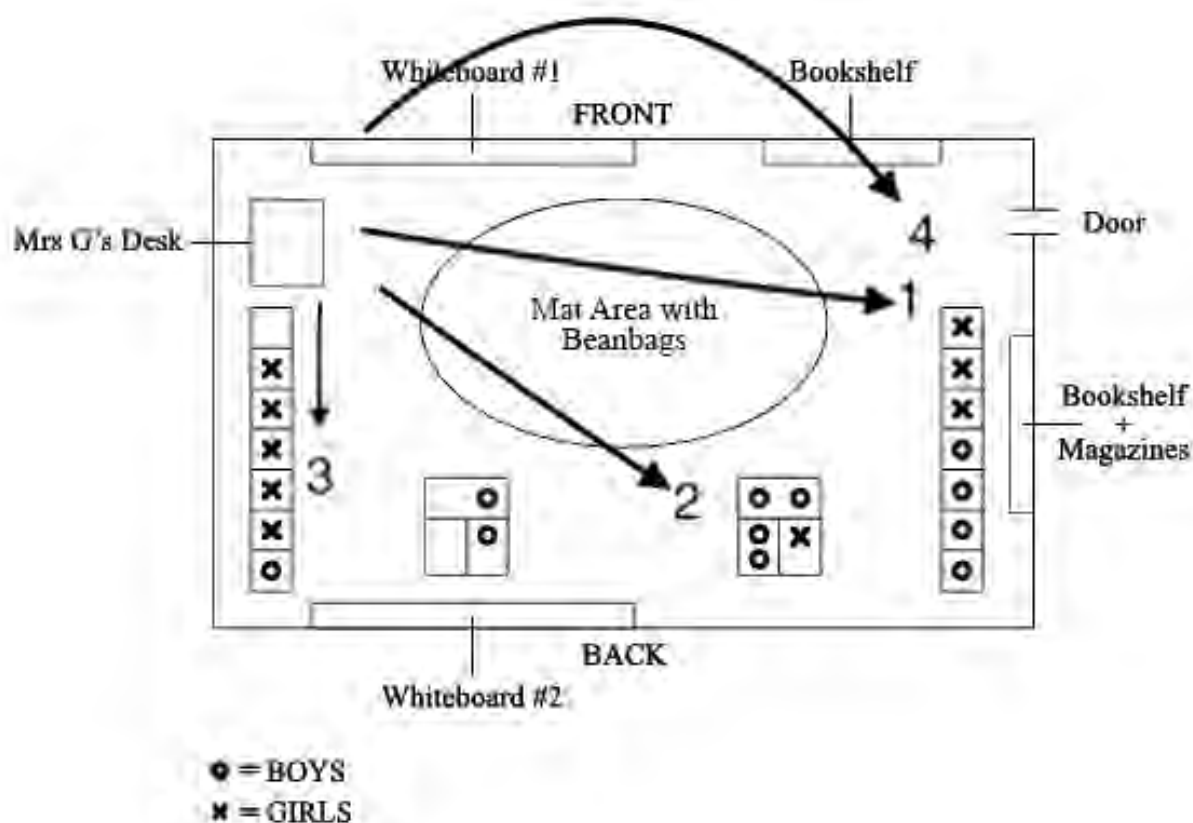
For this part of the analysis it is crucial to reiterate that there are two types of positioning- interactive and reflexive. The former is the way in which one is positioned by others and the latter is the way the individual positions themselves. Positioning is often achieved through discourse. During our go-along conversations and the official interview, Miss Gato expressed the idea that there were different kinds of readers- the 'good' and the 'bad reader'. (fieldnotes, 21/06/2017)

#### Extract 5

"I think you get two types of reader, I think you get the type that read every moment they possibly can... while you're trying to teach and at break time etcetera. Then you get the type that silent reading is always going to be a chore [for] and it doesn't matter what you do it's not going to be of benefit. Well, it's going to be of benefit but you're going to be fighting with them every single lesson." (Interview, Turn 14, Appendix 9)

It is important to note that Miss Gato constructs a value judgement, or as per Davies & Harré's "moral orders", which is placed on each of these 'types' of readers and as such would indicate that there is either a gain or loss to be had by the assumption of either identity position. The identity constructed for student 11 by her teacher was based on two things- firstly, Miss Gato's assumptions about the kinds of things she/a 'good reader' should do in any given SSR-period as well as student 11's positioning in general when considering the teacher-student dynamic and how it plays out in general classroom discourse. This is important when analysing student 11's positioning as the latter kind of reader by Miss Gato and the subsequent effects. Student 11, by her own admission and through her answers on the questionnaire provided, did not deem herself to be a 'bad reader' outside of the classroom setting (appendix 6, turn; appendix 8) but was to some

extent aware that she had been positioned as unsuccessful during the SSR-period by her teacher. When watching Miss Gato in the SSR-period and the way she scanned the classroom when monitoring the students, I observed that she had a routine in her eye movement: when she looked up from her computer she always focused on three different areas of the class first before doing a general scan. Her 'surveillance' always began in the front right corner, where student 11 was seated, moved to the back of the class, to the front left corner closest to her desk and then finally a general sweep of the classroom.



**Figure 2 (above):** Diagram indicating the direction of Miss Gato's gaze during the observed SSR-period. Arrow 1 indicates she started her surveillance at the front right corner of the classroom and arrow 4 shows the 'general sweep' of the entire classroom.



Through Miss Gato's consistent watching of Student 11 and marking her as one of the students that needed a 'push when reading' during our off-record go-along conversations, Student 11 was positioned as being a weak reader. Student 11, aware that she was one of the students who would be regularly checked up on, made sure to perform the identity of being a good *student* if she could not 'pass' for a good reader during the SSR-periods. As such, she firstly made sure that when the situation called for it, she had the 'right' kind of reading material in front of her for the SSR-periods. She explained to me that there was a type of book allowed during the SSR-period. During the focus group conversation and during off-record conversation, student 11 explained that if "sometimes if we don't have a book like I just told you now (referring to a conversation she and I had had in the hallway before the focus group), it would be a good idea if you had a second option to not get in trouble." (Appendix 8) Although Miss Gato never formally stated that students were not allowed to read certain types of materials, she would on occasion walk around the class and either endorse or oppose the students' reading material. If she did not approve of the type of literature, students would either have to produce something else or read one of the books or magazines from the shelf inside the classroom. Even though Miss Gato reported not to have any rules regarding the types of materials read during the SSR-period ("There's no requirement of them- the only requirement is that they sit and read." [Interview, 21/06/2016, Appendix 9, Turn 16]), this was not always the case in practice. In the first three days of my observation, students were *not* allowed to read any comics or magazines. Moreover, there was no consistency in terms of the requirement of reading a book to completion. The focus during these sessions seemed to be on the *types of books* students were reading and not necessarily the reading of materials they found enjoyable. During the focus group discussion, a student remarked "[if] we don't have the books we have to read the magazines and I've read all of them!", to murmured agreement from their peers (focus group interview with children, Appendix 8). It was clear that they and others had been on the receiving end when it came to not having their choice of literature approved for the SSR-period and so they (student 11 included) made sure to conform to expectations. Student 11 did so by firstly bringing works of fiction deemed appropriate for someone of her age by her teacher and secondly, always having a "second option to not get in *trouble*" (emphasis is my own; Appendix 8). She was keenly aware of when she was being monitored because when given the opportunity to read what she wanted on her own without reprimand or judgement, she sat for the remainder of the SSR-period on day 4 reading uninterrupted.

When in an environment that was not conducive to reading comfortably or without interruption and/or observation, student 11 would regularly attempt to position herself as a good reader by mimicking what was expected (whether such requirements were explicitly stipulated by Miss Gato or something more generally learned through observations by the students was unclear). She would enter the class in the exact same manner as her peers, take out the fictional book that was required of her and hunch over her desk, giving off the appearance of reading. By positioning herself as a good student 'trying' to be a good reader, student 11 would escape reprimand and maintain the 'peace' (that is avoid unwanted attention and possible subsequent reprimand)- something I surmised she sought to do as she was incredibly soft-spoken and seemingly shy. Any attention directed towards her seemed unwanted and she was able to manoeuvre or negotiate this social setting- averting unwanted attention and placating Miss Gato. Whether she was fully cognisant of it or not, student 11 at some level was aware of the fact that her competence in classroom discourse and all that was expected of her was at times intrinsically linked to her competence academically. If she could appear to be a 'good reader', she could then also appear to be a 'good student'. All too often struggling and reluctant readers are often conflated. As such, the students who are deemed as 'poor' or unenthusiastic readers in a class learn how to 'fly under the radar'- they learn that if they are firstly quiet during the SSR-periods (or any reading activity for that matter) and appear through their body language (like hunching over or turning the pages at the 'right' time) to be reading, they escape admonishment and are therefore thought of as successful participants in the literacy event. This is especially true when the emphasis is seemingly placed on appearing to adhere to the rules (like in Miss Gato's class) over actual reading.

Even though she had been positioned in this role of reluctant (and by inference in this context 'bad') reader during the SSR-periods, student 11 shared that she in fact "[loves] reading". In her own words, "I'm obsessed with reading." (Appendix 8) When asked what she thought good readers did, she expressed that "they read in a quiet area" (much like she liked to do) and that she and good readers employ reading to "to calm yourself down". Through conversation and observation, it seems that student 11 viewed reading as pleasurable and soothing- when done in a manner that she felt safe and relaxed in. That is, free of judgement and outside distractions or noise. Student 11, whether consciously or not, was able to leave that specific interactive position in the SSR-period as she reflexively viewed/positioned herself as someone who enjoys reading, and moreover someone who is a 'good reader' outside of the SSR-period. (Appendix 8) Further confirmation of the fact

that student 11 positioned herself as a keen and avid reader but struggled with reading in the SSR-period came from her answers in the questionnaire given to each of the students. Student 11 remarked that she liked reading either in the mornings *before* the SSR-periods at school or when “lieing [sic] down and when it’s quiet otherwise [she gets] distracted.” (Appendix 8) She expressed that she wasn’t able to focus and read in the SSR-period because of the classroom set-up and because of the regular interruptions both from Miss Gato and announcements on the school intercom. Again, it wasn’t necessarily that student 11 did not want to read during the SSR-periods, it is that she couldn’t. To read for pleasure, she preferred a *truly* quiet and relaxed environment, where she was not confined to sitting in a chair at a desk and could read what she wanted without surveillance. (see Appendix 14) The classroom set-up (Figure 1) and the later changing of desks (Figures 2-5) did not always allow for student 11 to engage in the practice of SSR on her terms- that is alone. Because day 4 of observation was (in comparison to the previous days’ sessions) relatively relaxed in that Miss Gato was not monitoring the students and their choice of material as closely, student 11 seized the chance to read. Reflexively student 11 positioned herself as being a ‘good reader’ because she was able to “read in a quiet area” and utilised reading as a means to centre her thoughts and relax herself. Student 11 thus, dependent on the space and its participants, was interactively positioned by her teacher as ‘bad reader’ and reflexively positioned as a ‘good reader’ in spaces outside of the classroom. She also performed “good student’ in her pretense at reading during SSR to escape attention or admonishment.

Positioning coupled with the physical set-up of the classroom space resulted in student 11 being constructed as a ‘reluctant reader’. The classroom infrastructure, although set up in rows, was big enough for students to occupy the mat-area with the ample bean bag seats and space. The SSR-period in this sense did not allow for the transcendent nature of third spaces in that students like student 11 were not afforded the opportunity to utilise the space as per their wishes (be it lying down or even sitting in spaces other than at the desk, where they pleased.) Possibly because of the dual nature of the SSR-period, that is administrative as well as reading period, students were ‘confined’ to their desks in rows or group set-ups allocated to them and thus never fully able to realise SSR-periods as being separate from the school day, ie. third spaces for reading at leisure. Further she liked to “read alone when out of school because [she focuses] more” (student 11’s questionnaire)- it was not the fact that student 11 did not like to read but the fact that the SSR-period was not only a period for reading for enjoyment and thus detracted from her ability to do so in a

way that made her feel comfortable. (Appendix 8) Even though non-accountability is a key principle, the lack thereof still played a key role in Miss Gato's SSR-period, which leads me to the second level of lack of encouragement and the possible effects thereof.

Miss Gato, was never able to engage in SSR-periods to model reading for pleasure during my observation. Perhaps this was due to the pressures on her to complete administrative tasks and due to a lack of sufficient time for reading. As was before mentioned, Miss Gato viewed the SSR-periods as being both a reading and administrative period but she also alluded to the fact that [the period] was a time for students to calm down and quieten themselves ("if you have [the SSR-periods] for example after break where they've (the students) come in quite wild and you need to calm them down, I think that would be a more optimal time of the day." (Turn 16, Appendix 9) It seems that the focus or the point of the periods in the beginning of the day shifts from being a sustained silent reading period to it just being a silent period where being quiet and following the rules is the main aim. The students also seem to be aware of the dual nature of these periods, as during the focus group discussions they lamented the fact that the periods were so short or rather erratic (both in terms of time and activity), but understood that it was because of external pressures like work or administrative tasks. ("The thing is I don't like silent reading because when you get to the good part of the book then they say "Books away!" ; "I think it's because we have more work to do now that's why we maybe have less time" [Appendix 8, Turn 25 and 52]). Student 11, and perhaps her fellow classmates, know to appear to read and for good measure have a 'second option' so as not to get in trouble and even more so to maintain the status quo of silence. Any deviations from the tranquil norm are met with chiding and such was the case with student 19, towards the end of my initial observation on my first day.

#### **4.2.1.2 The Positioning of Student 19 as a Good Reader.**

An incredibly curious and humorous young man, student 19 was well liked by both his peers and his teachers. Like student 11, and a majority of the students in this class and school, student 19 was white and spoke English as his first language. Academically strong, an avid reader and a lively participant in class discussions, student 19 was identified by his teacher (Miss Gato) as being one of the "strong readers". Unlike student 11 who Miss Gato felt constantly needed observation, student 19 was for the most part left to read what he wanted because he was able to assimilate and read in almost any environment. (Appendix 9, turn 14)

Day 1 Observation (19/06/2017; 07:53) Extract 5 – “Student 19’s enthusiastic reading”. Student 19 quickly makes his way into the classroom with the rest of his classmates. Unlike the other students who retrieve books from their bags, student 19 has his book on hand having started reading outside the classroom before the school day’s commencement. Student 19 wastes no time in resuming his reading of his book. The classroom is quiet after Miss Gato’s initial command to read minutes earlier. Student 19 is particularly engrossed in his book, and guffaws at a part he finds particularly amusing. This breaks the silence and causes Miss Gato to glance up from her computer. Student 19 almost instinctually looks up at his teacher and nods in consent to read quietly for the remainder of the SSR-period.

In my and Miss Gato’s few off-record conversations, student 19 was identified as one of the ‘good’ readers in her class, with casual but revealing remarks like “See? I can leave him [referring to student 19] alone because he likes reading and doesn’t need much of a push from me”. Through conversations with him outside the classroom before the SSR-periods, I was able to gather that he came from a family that valued both literacy and reading for pleasure. An avid reader and one of the top performing students in Miss Gato’s class, student 19 still struggled with the SSR-period set-up like his classmate 11- he felt that “[he doesn’t] like silent reading because when [he got] to the good part of the book then ‘they’ (Miss Gato) would say “Books away!” (Appendix 8) Although factors like classroom set-up or administrative tasks didn’t overtly affect him (although in his questionnaire he indicated that he did prefer reading in “quiet places while lying down” (Appendix 7)), he still struggled to engage in the reading period both in terms of time and encouragement. I first noticed student 19 in the hallway before the lesson. Unlike his classmates he had, on all five days, made sure to stand in line a few minutes before the bell rang commencing the start of the day so that he could start reading his book on his own. Student 19, a vibrant and ‘strong’ learner had been positioned by both himself and Miss Gato as being a ‘good’ reader- of the two hours a day he spent reading, student 19 enjoyed books with “action, cars, guns with a tiny bit of romance” and appreciated the affective quality of reading and all the “mental pictures” one could conjure up when engrossed in a book. (Appendix 7) Unlike his classmate, student 11, student 19 was a chatty and popular member of the classroom. Although studious and sure to finish his class/homework, student 19 was more boisterous or rather outspoken in class when compared to student 11. Unlike his peer who it

seemed tried to shirk the gaze and any possible judgment of Miss Gato (therefore resulting in her being extremely quiet in class and not necessarily interacting with her teacher unless called upon), student 19 often engaged Miss Gato in conversations in the hallway before the school day's commencement chatting about non-academic topics like the school's cat or the day's weather. It is possible that because student 19 had been positioned as being a good reader and academically strong, he did not feel the need to additionally position himself as being a good or rather 'well-behaved' student and as such Miss Gato did not play such an authoritarian role in his school-life. Sat at the back of the class furthest from the teacher's desk, student 19 was a part of the group of students that Miss Gato deemed as strong and as such their choices in literature were never heavily monitored, unlike their peers such as student 11. Like student 11, student 19 knew the routine and would on the daily prompt sit down, take out his book and (actually) read at the commencement of the SSR-period. Perhaps because he had been positioned as being a well-read and strong student, student 19 was better able to adjust and read during these periods because there wasn't as much pressure placed on him to simultaneously position himself as a good student while partaking in the literacy practice of reading for pleasure. Student 19, and his peers at the back of the class, were not monitored by the teacher because they were positioned as being successful readers. They were positioned as good readers and therefore were able to be readers who read for pleasure and not to keep up appearances. To that point, although he was aware of the need for there to be silence during the SSR-periods, student 19 felt much less obliged to 'behave' than he did to read. Upon watching him in the first SSR-period, student 19 was engrossed in his book ("Lone Wolf" from Robert Muchamore's Cherub series), so much so that at around 17 minutes into the lesson he laughed out loud at something he found amusing in his book. Student 19 was almost immediately shushed by Miss Gato and the state of silence was restored at the cost of his enjoyment of the book. Student 11, in the mean-time, continued to pretend to read and was left alone as she had intended to be. Both students, in their own ways have learnt to 'get by' in these lessons in spite of external factors like environment and time. In both instances however, Miss Gato was positioned as not a facilitator of the SSR-period but as the enforcer of good behaviour due to factors both external and internal.

#### **4.2.1.3 The positioning of Miss Gato during SSR-periods.**

In her seventh year of teaching at Cattus Primary, Miss Gato was the homeroom and Mathematics teacher to the class of grade 5 students. A self-proclaimed avid reader, Miss Gato expressed her disappointment at her inability to partake in SSR-periods in the man-

ner she should would have liked to. That is, Miss Gato could not use these periods to read for enjoyment as she wished she could. During the observation period, she was positioned in multiple ways (both by herself and the students)- taking up the position of either teacher, enforcer of good behaviour or as a facilitator of reading and conversations that might arise from literature and as such utilised the SSR-periods differently.

Extract 6- “Miss Gato’s facilitating of the SSR-period”.

Day 1 Fieldnotes – Classroom Observation (19/06/2017; 07:50)

“Read!” It is 7:50am on a cloudy and cold Monday morning and it is six minutes into my first observation of the grade 5 class’s daily SSR-period. Of the 23 students in the class, only 20 are currently present, and they receive the firm instruction from their homeroom teacher Miss Gato to focus on the task at hand- silent individual reading. The students had just minutes prior quickly and quietly entered the classroom and sat at their respective desks in the designated four rows. Satisfied that the students are quiet enough and that there is an open book on every desk, Miss Gato turns her attention to the computer screen on her desk. Miss Gato is engrossed in administrative tasks until the end of the SSR-period, only engaging with students to either maintain the quiet in the classroom or remind them of tasks they are to complete for the maths class that follows. When the SSR-period ends at 8:10am, Miss Gato has not yet finished with the work in front of her. The lesson following the SSR-period happens to be her Maths class. She gives the students an option to either carry on reading or to sit quietly while she finishes her task. Only 8 of the students decide to keep reading, the rest decide to put their books away or lay their heads on the table so as not to disturb the peace.

Extract 7- “A Relaxed SSR-period”.

Day 4 Fieldnotes – Classroom Observation (22/06/2017; 07:43)

It is a cold and rainy day and because of this a majority of the class of grade 5’s are late for school and not present at the start of this SSR-period. The period begins in the same way as it has over the last 3 days but, perhaps because of the large number of students missing, the SSR-period and even Miss Gato’s facilitating of it is much more relaxed than those of the previous days. Miss Gato allows the students to enter the classroom and to settle down without much coercion. Instead of making her way to her desk to carry out her administrative tasks as she had previously done, Miss Gato instead asks the class to remain fairly quiet as she leaves the classroom to go and interact with the “class cat”- a stray from the neighbourhood she and the students feed and play with when the opportunity

presents itself. Miss Gato returns after seven minutes and fields questions about the cat and it's condition. She and the students discuss where the cat could possibly go when not on school property and it's well-being for a few minutes, all while the students that were caught in traffic filter in to the class. The discussion carries on briefly before Miss Gato reminds the students that it is still an SSR-period and that they should resume reading. She then proceeds to her desk and begins the administrative tasks for the day. She looks up at 8:04am and chides Student 5 for getting up and wanting to change her book without having finished her current book. Student 5 resumes her seat and Miss Gato returns her gaze to her computer until the end of the SSR-period at 8:07am.

Extract 8- "Civvies Day Discussions".

Day 5 Fieldnotes – Classroom Observation (23/06/2017; 07:50)

The SSR-period begins differently on the final day of observation. In lieu of school uniform, the students are dressed up as their choice of sportsman or sportswoman and the excitement can be felt amongst them before the lesson begins. Miss Gato leads the class in at 7:50am and instead of sitting at their desks and partaking in the SSR-periods as they had done previously, the students all gather at the front of the classroom around the mat. (Appendix) They take pillows and form a circle around their teacher, who begins a conversation about each of their costumes and the associated sport. A lively discussion about polar bears and polar bear swimmers ensues and the students are then shown a clip (Appendix 18) of said swimmers. The conversation on the mat ends and the students then head to their desks to begin reading at 8:00am. Miss Gato, unlike the previous days, does not enforce silence or reading of specific materials. She instead interacts with students that approach her desk and sporadically works on her computer. The lesson carries on in this manner until Miss Gato ends the lesson at 8:09am by asking the students to fill out assessment forms unrelated to the SSR-period.

Extract 9- "Timing of the SSR-period".

Interview with Miss Gato (22/06/2017; 07:04)

"I think the time of day is important. I don't think it is optimal to have it at the beginning of the day. I think we try and use the SSR-period as an admin period slash reading period slash everything, whereas if you have it for example after break where they've come in quite wild and you need to calm them down, I think that would be a more optimal time of the day. But the CAPS curriculum is so huge and there's no time to do it as separate, so



it's the best alternative to do it (this way) and try fit it in. To fit it in we have taken two minutes off of every lesson to try and fit the silent reading period."

It seems that from the conception of SSR, one of the predominant features is teacher involvement, more so the teacher as a role model. (Holt & O'Tuel, 1989: 290-297) This is not to say that the other features or tenets of an SSR-period are not important, and it is certainly not the case that the absence of modelling is directly linked to unsuccessful SSR-periods. However, one is inclined to think that teacher as a role model as well as facilitator (a point one will return to), is vitally important. Yoon's review, with the focus of the affective quality of SSR on the individual's attitude towards reading, found a positive effect on the individual's attitude towards reading, making special mention of the fact that role-modelling (but non-interference) on behalf of the teacher in the class as well as the students being afforded the ability to self-select their reading materials (thus granting students' agency) were the factors that most influenced the effectiveness of the SSR program in any given classroom (Yoon, 2002). Remarking, "...if I had the opportunity and if I didn't have admin, I would be reading with them and I think that's one of the disadvantages" (Turn 22, Appendix 9), Miss Gato seemed to be aware of this and from go-along conversations, observation and personal interview, one gleaned that she was despondent and perhaps even feeling guilty that she was unable to model reading during the SSR-periods.

During my observations, Miss Gato was in fact for the majority of the time preoccupied with administrative work. A teacher at Cattus primary School for seven years prior to observation and recently having made the move from English teacher to Mathematics teacher, Miss Gato shared that she was experiencing SSR-periods differently in that she was hindered by deadlines and administrative demands and unable to read and engage with the students in ways she thought beneficial. Watching and talking to the class teacher, one deduced that she was under a tremendous amount of pressure, be it because of the volume of work required of her by the school or because of the curriculum. One got the sense that there was not really any other time in the day to complete administrative tasks and as such, she needed the students to behave in the SSR periods so that she could complete her tasks (Interview with Miss Gato, 22/06/2017, Appendix 9). As such, Miss Gato positioned herself as facilitator of the SSR-periods and the custodian of silence. When she was not engaging in administrative activities or writing (she spent one SSR-period marking tests), she was making sure that the students were quiet. Not only had the classroom been set up in such a way that allows for Miss Gato to be able to see all the

students from her desk, the students are also well versed in what was to happen in these periods that is- enter the classroom, take out your book and sit down *quietly*. Moreover, Miss Gato had identified students (like student 11) who according to her struggled to either be quiet or stay on task and she corrected 'deviant' behaviour through curt prompts or pointed glances. Majority of the students managed to stay on task but for those that 'struggled' (be it not being able to remain quiet or to continuously read or at least appear to do so during the period), the time spent in SSR-periods was watching their teacher and trying to escape admonishment. One is inclined to think that there might be a correlation between the students' distraction during reading and the teacher's involvement in alternative activities (Mangan, 1988). Miss Gato commanding the students to "read!" could be considered as being insufficient. While a teacher can espouse the importance of reading during these periods, if she is not able to substantiate this through her own action, it could prove to be ineffective. That is, it might be the case that students learn to read in these periods by means of observing and following suit. Miss Gato was very much aware of the lost opportunity to provide a positive model of not only silent reading but also reading for enjoyment during these SSR-periods because of her work demands. However modelling does not end at the conclusion of the SSR-period. There are alternative ways of modelling that may demonstrate the importance of reading and foster pleasure.

It has been postulated that children talking about reading, that is, what has been read during the SSR-period as well as discussion of literature in general can be beneficial for students (McCracken & McCracken, 1978: 406). Said conversations could be a way of modelling that is important for cultivating eager readers (McCracken & McCracken, 1978; Yoon, 2002). Even though Miss Gato was unable to read the way she wanted to during these periods, the two occasions that I observed her interacting with the students (especially during the class conversation regarding sportspeople) showed that modelling and interaction with reader and text could have a positive influence on reader motivation. Unlike on the previous three days of observation, during the 'civvies day discussion', Miss Gato was relaxed and engaged with the students and as such positioned herself as more of a facilitator than an enforcer of the rules. She fielded questions and elaborated on points raised by the students. Getting deeper into the conversation and picking up on the students' interest, she even searched the internet for and discussed a video about polar bear swimmers, reading small parts of the video and commenting on the athletes and the skills needed to become a polar bear swimmer. The students were deeply invested and were very eager to interact with their teacher, the text on the screen in front of them and

when it was time to return to their desks- the books in front of them as well. While one cannot say that there is a clear interdependence between modelling and reader motivation and participation, it was clear at least from this single observation that in this case modelling and conversations between teacher and students facilitated a 'successful' SSR-period. This particular SSR-period was also indicative of another possible factor that may contribute towards a successful period, that of *when* the period takes place.

The majority of the SSR-periods I observed took place first thing in the morning, right after the students arrived at school. It was not uncommon for students to be late or missing from the SSR-period. The students that were present, however, were energetic from having played with their friends while waiting for the start of the school day and needed time to calm down. During the interview, Miss Gato touched on the fact that SSR-periods were often used "as an admin period slash reading period slash everything", and to have it in the beginning of the day was awkward and possibly less effective. This was reiterated when considering the fact that having the students read *after* giving them sufficient time to cool off and calm down (by means of a class conversation and group reading), the students seemed to display on-task behaviour. Gambrell (1978) as well as Wheldall and Entwistle (1988) corroborate this inclination when they established that children were more productive and inclined to stay on task at different times in the day. Further, as per Miss Gato's recommendation to have the SSR-periods after break, Campell (1988) argues for having the reading periods either before or after the lunch break. Regardless, one can surmise that student comfort, scheduling, as well as less surveillance and more modelling all serve to benefit readers during SSR-periods. This isn't always possible or the case but the library could be considered the bridge, or third space, between the classroom (and traditional reading) and the home, as a possible site for successful sustained silent reading for enjoyment.

#### **4.2.2 The library as a potential third space.**

Cattus Primary School, aside from conducting the daily SSR-period, has a well-resourced, on-site library. The library is run by Mrs Ngeru, a former primary school teacher, who has been running the library since 2013. Passionate about books, reading and the importance of initiatives like SSR-periods and 'Readathons', the librarian has one half-hour lesson with each class weekly. During our interview she commented about how in those lessons she not only tries to encourage the students to read but also aims to foster and facilitate conversations around literature (Turn 12 and 24, Appendix 10). These library lessons and the

space of the library became an area of interest in that they bore the essential qualities of a third space (Moje et al., 2001). To explore the role of the library in supporting sustained silent reading, I decided to not only speak to the librarian at Cattus Primary School, but also consulted with the librarians at two other schools in the Western Cape that were in the same Quintile (5) as Cattus Primary and where SSR-periods also took place (see Chapter 5).

Before discussing the library as a potential third space, it is worth briefly revisiting the concept of third spaces and by extension the defining features of a third space. Used in a variety of fields to describe the meeting ground or intersection of two distinct spaces (Bhabha, 1995, Guitierrez et al. 1999; Moje et al., 2001), one could view third space in this specific context as the theoretical and physical space between and combining the first space and the second space. (First space in this context would be the home space or the space in which the students report feeling the most comfortable reading outside of the context of school. The second space in this case represents the pedagogical space or the space of the classroom and more specifically the majority of the SSR-periods.) Viewing the library sessions through the lens of being a potential third space, one was able to see how the narrative of reading and pleasure could be broadened. As Kirkland explains, “[In] third spaces, both researchers and educators, teachers and students move away from the notions of space that harden into formal and informal categories. Instead, space gets repositioned around more flexible boundaries and forged in the stuff of both official and unofficial dimensions” (Kirkland, 2009: 12). This ‘hybrid’ context, as it has been called, is believed to sanction a more inclusive, and for some, more just pedagogical reality. In this way, Hochman (2006) views the third space as ‘a fertile ground for educational projects and initiatives, particularly those that educate around issues of difference’ (200). Importantly, she sees third spaces as ‘physical’ and ‘dialectical’, ‘a space that is neither school nor home’.” (Kirkland, 2009: 12) Library sessions could be viewed as a space where students can read for pleasure, and engage in discourses around reading without detracting from instructional classroom discourse, tasks and time.

Day 4 Fieldnotes – Library Space and Set-up (22/06/2017)

Extract 10- “The Library Space Walk-Through”

Cattus Primary, as was mentioned, has an extremely well-resourced library. More so, the books that the students have to choose from are available in an array of medias- students can choose to either read hardcopies of their books or borrow the iPads available from the

library and read off of them, although it must be noted that Mrs Ngeru commented during the library walk-through that currently the iPads have been used primarily for either in-class work or reading after hours but she has been making the move towards incorporating the iPads more into library lessons. Of the hardcopy books, students have the choice of choosing either English, Afrikaans or Xhosa books. The school library has a section for each language, the English books being in the majority. The library space itself is a spacious and airy one. (Appendix 14) Upon entering the library, Mrs Ngeru's desk is on the left-hand side of the room. Behind her desk and the colourful posters either encouraging students to read or showcasing the books on offer, there is an office off limits to students where Mrs Ngeru keeps the school's iPads and works from when the students are not in the library. Moving further into the library, there is a huge desk with 12 chairs surrounding it, which one was told students are free to use during either the library session or should they need a space to work as a group. Surrounding the table are the different sections and sub-sections of the available library books. Directly behind this workspace, is the English section that has been divided into three main sub-sections- those of Fiction, Non-Fiction as well as Magazines and Reference and Catalogue materials. Further, the books have been staggered in terms of age or rather reading level, making it easier for the students to navigate. To the left of the work space is the Afrikaans section. Like the English section, the Afrikaans books have been appointed as either Fiction or Non-Fiction and again staggered by reading level. To the right of the workspace, the Xhosa section, although not as extensive as the other sections, is made up almost entirely of Fiction books. It must be noted that the reading level for the Xhosa books does not vary greatly either. In between the bookshelves of each of the sections, Mrs Ngeru has created little nooks for the students to read in. There are bean bags and pillows scattered around the library that the students are free to use when reading during the library lesson or after school in their free time. The library itself is well-lit and ventilated, with a plethora of physical books and environmental print and resources at the student's disposal.

Mrs Ngeru, was aware of the facts that firstly reading is an applied skill that can only be acquired through consistent practice (Frank Smith as quoted in Nuttall, 2005: 128), and secondly that in order for the SSR-periods to be effective students needed the time to not only read but get properly invested in the texts of their choice (Holt & O'Tuel, 1989: 290-297). Although Mrs Ngeru allowed the students to come into the library during the SSR-periods, she expressed her frustration at the fact that the SSR-periods were not being utilised in the ways they were meant to (be it because of time constraints or because

there was no accountability in terms of actually reading for the students) (Turn 20, Appendix 10). In a go-along conversation, Mrs Ngeru also commented on the physical comfort aspect of reading for pleasure (Yoon, 2002) and how the classroom set-up did not always allow for this type of reading (Turn 20, Appendix 10). It was through these go-along conversations, interviews and observations that one came to see that the library (space) and library sessions had elements of what could be considered the third space and therefore might be an ideal site for the model SSR-periods to take place. In terms of what constitutes as the ideal SSR-period, one chose to mainly focus on the individual's autonomy in terms of text selection; role-modelling or positive influence on behalf of either their peers or the teacher/school-official present during said periods, a comfortable physical setting as well as the availability of resources (both in terms of print and genre of the texts the students are expected to read in SSR-periods).

Using the data collected during the focus group interview as well as the questionnaires completed by the students in the grade 5 class, only 2 out of the 23 student participants expressed that they preferred either standing or sitting at a desk while reading for leisure (Appendix 7 and 8). The remaining 20 students (it must be noted that one student did not mention a particular preference), indicated that when reading for pleasure they preferred lying down while reading in a quiet and comfortable environment. (Appendix 7) As noted by Mrs Ngeru and proponents of SSR-periods, students should also have uninterrupted time to read, and do so in a comfortable space or setting (Gardiner, 2001; Moore et. al, 1980; McCracken & McCracken, 1978). Mrs Ngeru provided the students with uninterrupted book selection and reading time during the library lessons. She relayed to me in our interview together that after the typical greeting and settling of students at the start of each lesson, Mrs Ngeru would allocate time for the students to go around the library and choose the book they wished to take out that week. Once every student had a book, she would then have the students partake in uninterrupted silent reading time. This differed from the classroom/official SSR-periods in that the students would read alongside Mrs Ngeru and secondly, and just as importantly, the students could sit where they wanted and *how* they wanted. It might then be the case that students directly link their level of physical comfort to their enjoyment while reading, and this might account for why students like student 11 (and her peers) found reading to be an easier and more pleasurable experience during library lessons or at home. To reiterate, students noted that they were more inclined to read for pleasure and read more if they felt comfortable in their surroundings and manner of sitting. The library lessons as described by Mrs Ngeru stand in stark contrast to the SSR-pe-

riods observed and described in Miss Gato's class. Miss Gato had the students sit at their desks in a very organised manner every lesson that resembled the traditional classroom set up and did not allow for comfortable sitting or even laying down. Mrs Ngeru had more freedom to set the library space up in a manner that allowed students easy access to all the literature available, but also then allowed for comfortable, quiet and uninterrupted reading afterwards in the little 'nooks' (Turn 28, Appendix 10) Other than the environment being an affective or comfortable one, an important key factor of a successful sustained silent reading period was the student's autonomy to freely choose their reading material (Gardiner, 2001).

As mentioned, the library at Cattus Primary has a wide selection of texts for the students to choose from- be it genre or language. The school requires that the students take on Afrikaans and Xhosa as additional languages to the language of instruction, English, and the library is reflective of this (Fieldnotes, 22/06/2017). The library is varied in language selection as well as genre and media- students had the option of choosing between a plethora of fiction, non-fiction or digital works and had access to the library's own sites and other sites and applications like PadLit that supported the student's reading (Turn 30, Appendix 10)

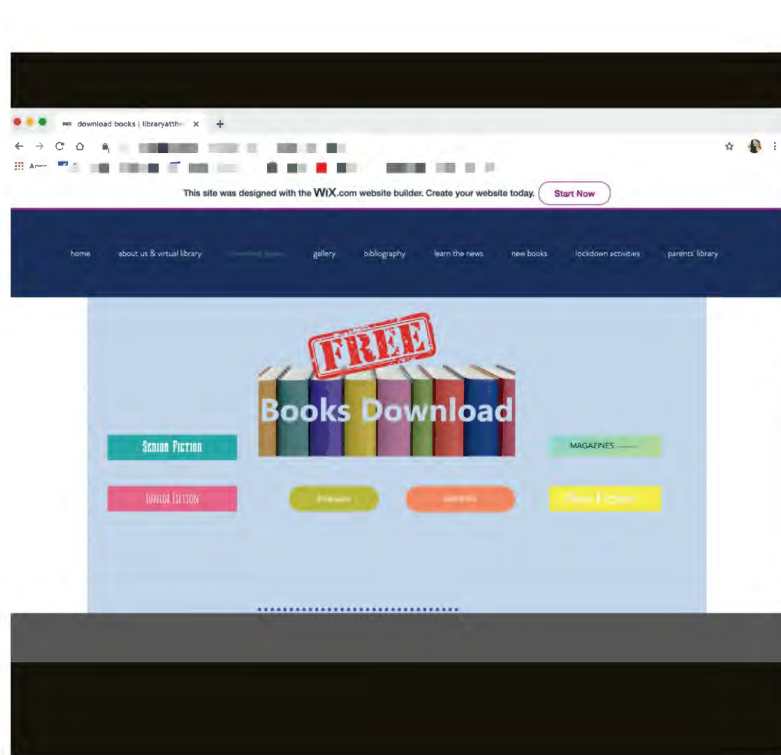
#### Extract 12- "Reading Culture".

Interview with the school librarian, Mrs Ngeru (22/06/2017;)

Librarian: "When they come for library every now and again, I just say 'Alright! Let's have a chat session. What have you been reading? What have I been reading? What I've got new in the library,' and that sort of thing. So it's quite nice. They actually really enjoy that sort of thing, hearing what... what I've read, what's new and what they've each read. Quite a few of the children belong to public libraries, so there is a bit of a feeding of other stuff being read and... Some of them read on kindles and lots of children have parents here that are quite happy to go and buy them books."

Given that Mrs Ngeru only has one lesson with each class per cycle and the fact that there is not a fixed syllabus for these sessions (Turn 26, Appendix 10), she reported that she was able to create lessons that she felt were well-suited to both the students' interests as well as what she thought was necessary for them to learn during these periods. Outside of

the normal or rather typical library session, Mrs Ngeru teaches and discusses concepts like the Dewey Decimal System, the organization of books in the library, the correct way to turn the pages in a book, literature terminology as well as the differences between works of fiction and non-fiction (Turn 26, Appendix 10). She also makes use of the iPads available in the library to help students familiarise themselves with bibliographies and how to make ones of their own. The school also has a library website that is used for practical matters like detailing what books are in the library and will be coming in, as well as featuring the students' book reviews and pictures concerning different books (Appendix 13a and 13b). This site is available to all the students and Mrs Ngeru had recently made use of the application Cahoot to set up questionnaires in a game format for the students to interact with in their own time and to promote the reading culture in the school (Turn 30, Appendix 10).



**Figure 3 (above): The home page of the school's library website set up by and managed by the librarian, Mrs Ngeru. The students are able to download content as well as upload their own reviews.**



When regarding Mrs Ngeru's description of the typical library session, it became clear that these lessons had the markers or factors of a successful silent reading period. As per Berglund et.al. (1983), "what a teacher does during and after silent reading defines silent reading for students" (537). That is, the role of the teacher or facilitator in the case of the school's librarian, during sustained silent reading periods is of the utmost importance as they define the behaviour or actions of the students during these sessions. If the teacher or the facilitator appears to be reading, the students are more likely to follow suit. During the school's official reading periods, the teacher observed (Miss Gato), was not able to participate in silent reading periods in this manner because of time and administration constraints and as such- at least in the case of the grade five students observed- students were not as likely to fully or rather meaningfully participate in these periods. However, during the library sessions, Mrs Ngeru who was afforded the time in her lessons to engage with the students and actively participate in their and *her own* reading, found the students to be more "hyped" about reading (Turn 30, Appendix 10). In the instances where the students were not able to read by themselves (primarily the lower grades), Mrs Ngeru explained how she would use the lessons to read aloud to the students and engage them in conversations about the literature (Turn 26, Appendix 10). Apart from actively reading with or for the students, the teacher or facilitator can further foster an independent reading culture and interest in reading by talking about what either they or the students have just read (Barsem, Harms & Pogue, 2002). Mrs Ngeru noted that speaking to the students about the books that they read had a positive effect on their inclination to read. She remarked how she would sometimes forgo a planned activity during the library sessions to have a "chat session" with the students about what they all have been reading and what new additions there were to the library. The students really "[enjoyed] that sort of thing", and in her view, this fostered a reading culture that extended beyond the classroom or school space (Turn 24, Appendix 10).

In exploring the role of the library in supporting SSR-periods, it became evident that the library lessons, for the most part, more than bearing the markers of a successful SSR-period, had elements of both the previously mentioned first (home) and second (classroom) space, and as such could be a potential site for the Third Space for the students. To further distinguish the different kinds of spaces and better understand the library's potential as a Third Space, it is worth considering Bakhtin's monologic and dialogic ideologies in the educational space, their effect on roles of power and what this means for diverse sites like the Third Space. Bakhtin's theories surrounding language have long since influenced liter-

ary ideologies and concomitantly or rather subsequently have had an influence on educational theory. More specifically, on classroom dialogue and discourse. In trying to show the library as being a potential site for a Third Space, I will focus on what Bakhtin terms the “monologic” and “dialogic”, as well as broach the concept of the “carnival” and how this can relate back to Third Space theory, specifically in the context of education.

When distinguishing between the two kinds of discourse that can present themselves in a classroom, that is monologic or dialogic, it would be most helpful to begin by thinking of monologic discourse as being the traditional or most common form of discourse in the classroom. That is when regarding teaching approaches, the monologic approach is one based in “mono-voicedness, particularly of teachers in instruction, as common in all traditional approaches toward teaching”. (Yaqubi & Rashidi, 2019: 13) The monologic approach reiterates the traditional view of teaching, one where the teacher is the centre and driver or rather controller of the discourse in the classroom. Monologic discourse is aimed mainly at the “transmission of knowledge to students and tries to remain firmly in the control of the goals of talk” (Yaqubi & Rashidi, 2019: 14). The monologic approach is seemingly inherently authoritarian and does not allow for genuine dialogue. The teachers voice is the dominant one in most discussions and if students wish to engage with teachers on a level other than that of listener or rather receiver, they need to firstly learn “how to speak like the teacher, in the teacher’s voice” (Elmborg, Jacobs, McElroy, & Nelson, 2015: 145). When regarding voice and the possible convergence of it and space, a space can be “structured with rules that prohibit speaking at all, or rules that prescribe specific authorised ways of speaking” (Elmborg, Jacobs, McElroy, & Nelson, 2015: 145). For the most part, this was the case in Miss Gato’s classroom during the SSR-periods. Because of the before mentioned external factors and the physical set up of the classroom during the reading periods, the class teacher inadvertently had created a monologic environment by insisting on certain conventions and modes of conduct that carry over from the official classroom or rather teaching time (Appendix 9). For the SSR-periods in Miss Gato’s classroom to more closely resemble the ideal version of sustained silent reading times, the classroom space would need to take on more features attributed to the home space- a dialogic space where authority to engage in discourse is not solely vested in the teacher or facilitator. The students in Miss Gato’s class commented on how they found sustained, individual reading to be easier and more enjoyable when the space they read in did not so closely resemble the classroom (that is, they could utilise the space freely) and if they had autonomy over the texts they read. Further, the students expressed that they enjoyed the dialogic ap-

proach to learning and reading, feeling like they had a voice and more so that their voice mattered (Turn 71, 92, 95 and 181; Appendix 8). Students like student 11 found it easier or rather more comfortable to read at home because of these previously mentioned factors. Mrs Ngeru, conscious of the factors that affected the success of the reading period and all the factors that go into making reading enjoyable as well as having the advantage of being able to structure her lessons and the space of the library in a manner that she sought to, reported that she implemented elements of the dialogic approach in her lessons but (I think) went further. Moving away from the traditional concept of libraries (and monologic classroom spaces) that tend to be rigid and authoritarian in structure and where unauthorised voices are considered taboo or even disruptive and beyond just being a dialogic space or a site that resembles the affective quality of the home space, Mrs Ngeru has possibly created a space in the library that bears features of Bakhtin's "carnival" (Bakhtin, 1984).

"Third space shares many traits with Bakhtin's carnival. Most importantly, it humanises space by allowing creativity, improvisation and humour. It narrows power differentials [...] The only space where a true interaction ... between teacher and student can occur ... is in the middle ground, or the "third space"" (Elmborg, Jacobs, McElroy, & Nelson, 2015: 146). Mrs Ngeru's purported lessons and the observed physical set up of the library, in my opinion could create an open space for safe and informal sharing of information. During the focus group interview conducted, student 4 when asked about his preferences regarding reading both in terms of material and set up of the space remarked he preferred a collaborative and relaxed environment when reading, "[because] we like to discuss our books with each other. So that we can say 'look how funny this one page is' or whatever" (Turn 142, Appendix 8). Mrs Ngeru commented on how she sought and fostered talk with and not *at* the students during her sessions with each class. In doing so she potentially divested authority from herself and apportioned it amongst the students (that is, Mrs Ngeru possibly opened the space to allow for an informal, relaxed and safe sharing of information which in turn could create opportunities for genuine reflection and conversation with the students). Through observation and reported experiences, the school's librarian seemed to have created a site outside of the classroom and home that presented students with the possibility of "an outlet for authentic self expression and dialogic information sharing between peers" (Elmborg, Jacobs, McElroy, & Nelson, 2015: 147). During the library sessions, the students were said to have been afforded the opportunity to act autonomously (in terms of book selection, means of reading and ways to use the space) as well as actively partici-

pate in conversations and make sure their voices were heard. Because of the set up of the library lessons, the students were able to actively participate in the learning process. The carnivalesque approach of the library lessons allowed for reading and literacy learning to happen more freely. “In a nutshell, the learning process benefits from dialogic concepts enormously” (Nesari, 2015: 647).

### **4.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter I introduced the site of the study, Cattus Primary, and contextualised the school in terms of demographic, location and general school reading culture. I then outlined the routines of the SSR-periods- what happened in each of these sessions. In doing so, I presented the class teacher, Miss Gato, and detailed what she did during said periods. This contrasted her feelings about reading and her lack of reading for pleasure in the SSR-period. This dissimilarity between Miss Gato’s actions during the SSR-period and her feelings regarding reading brought up the discussion of identity and positioning. I then presented two contrasting cases of the construction of a ‘reluctant’ and ‘good’ reader and further elaborated the discussion of positioning and identity by exploring Student 11 and Student 19’s respective enacting of each of their identities. Finally, I presented the school’s librarian and explored how her library sessions could possibly have the capacity to be a third space for the students, in terms of physical space and comfort as well as in the discursive sense. I presented Third Space in the context of education using Bakhtin’s conception of monologic and dialogic discourses and spaces and showed the library to be a possible site of the “carnival”- a go-between space outside of the classroom and home that could possibly allow for reading and discourse to happen more freely.

## Chapter 5. Conclusion and recommendations

### 5.1. Overview of the study

This case study investigated Sustained Silent Reading Periods in a Quintile-5, Western Cape grade 5 classroom and the effects, if any, such literacy events had on the participants and their relationship to literacy and text. Using the sociocultural perspective, the New Literacy (NLS) studies as well as Third Space and positioning theories as a theoretical framework, I was able to describe and analyse the literacy practice of reading in this environment as well as compare it to what the individuals in the study thought/purported they were doing. Data was collected from in-person observations of the SSR-periods, captured in field notes, 'go-along conversations' with participants, interviews with the class teacher, school librarian as well as a focus group of selected students from the class. Additionally, all students in the class were required to fill out a questionnaire and photographs of their books read in the SSR-periods were taken. Lastly, two interviews with librarians from schools similar to Cattus Primary were completed via e-mail and used for the recommendation section. The data was transcribed and presented in the format above.

### 5.2. Reflections on data/findings

#### 5.2.1. The SSR-Period

During my observation of Miss Gato's grade 5 class of students, every SSR-session (at first glance) would begin and end in much the same way. Four out of the five SSR-periods I observed began in a similar and prescriptive manner- each of the students would lead into the classroom in a quiet and orderly fashion. They would sit at their assigned desks, take out their books and read silently for the duration of the mandatory reading session. Initially, the SSR-periods bore all the markers of a 'successful' SSR-period. This is, the SSR-periods observed seemed to align with the 8 basic principles necessary of an SSR-period (Poser, 2006: 33). The students had access to reading materials, the physical environment was appealing and quiet, the students had 'distributed time to read' and were held accountable to testing what they had read, and the class teacher was to all appearances a facilitator for the students (Poser, 2006: 33). However, upon closer observation, inspection and through formal and informal conversations with the participants of the study it became evident that the SSR-periods (due to administrative and other external pressures) became an amalgamation of a reading and administration period. Due to factors like time constraints, the multi-functioning role of the SSR-period as well as the physical set-up of the

classroom, the question arose of whether any 'real' and affective reading could or did take place during these periods. This led to a deeper exploration of what the participants actually did during these periods and how the differing dynamics in identity and positioning had an effect on the participants experience of and actions in the SSR-period (Cameron, 2003; Davies & Harré: 1990). Positioning is often achieved through discourse in the classroom. During our go-along conversations and the official interview, Miss Gato expressed the idea that there were different kinds of readers- the 'good' and the 'bad [read reluctant] reader' (fieldnotes, 21/06/2017).

Student 19 and Student 11 were presented as being positioned as each of the types of readers respectively. The class teacher constructed a value judgement, as per Davies & Harré's moral orders, which was placed on each of the students and as such indicated that there was either a gain or loss to be obtained by the assumption of either of these identity positions. Miss Gato's positioning of Student 11 as being a reluctant reader, irrespective of the fact that Student 11 by her own admission loved to read and considered herself a 'good' if not avid reader, resulted in the class teacher scrutinising the young reader. Student 11, aware of her teacher's negative construction of her identity as a reader in turn spent the majority of the SSR-period trying to position herself as a good student- the SSR-period was spent making sure it looked like she was reading, making sure that she remained quiet and always guaranteeing that she had the 'correct' materials in front of her. She thus learned to perform the act of reading in SSR. The interactive positioning of Student 11 contrasted with the reflexive positioning of herself. Student 11's experience of the SSR-period differed greatly from Student 19 (who was positioned as a 'good reader' by his teacher), in that Student 19 was able to read for pleasure without the scrutiny or fear of being labelled a deviant. The participants illustrated how individual's conception of self and others is "always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and other' discursive practices" (Davies & Harré, 1990: 46). Reader motivation, which was dependent on the student's positioning within the SSR-period, was shown to be essential to a successful SSR-period- that is one where students read for pleasure in a silent and comfortable space.

Through conducting the interviews, doing the observations as well as taking into account what was expressed in the go-along conversations with the participants of the study, it became clear that the concept and purpose of the SSR-period, while important, at times differed from what actually took place in these periods and this (dependent on the partici-

pant) had an effect on the success of these periods when regarding the effect reading can have on an individual and their relationship to text. I had expected the SSR-periods to bear some sort of similarities to the ones I had read about from previous studies but found that factors like pressures on the teacher to complete administrative work, time constraints and the physical set-up of the classroom space deviated from the ideals of the hypothesised SSR-period. This then had an impact on the students' engagement and possibly their relationship to literacy and text. Surprisingly, the time the students and librarian described in the weekly library sessions were more closely aligned to what the ideal SSR-period would be. Perhaps consequently (I cannot be sure because of the scope of the study), reading during the library sessions was deemed to be a more relaxing and positive experience for the students- even those, like student 11 who struggled to 'stay on task' and more importantly enjoy reading during SSR-periods.

During the library sessions, students were by all accounts allowed to choose their own material, sit how and where they wanted when reading and were provided with a substantial amount of time to read for the sake of reading free of assessment or admonishment. Further Mrs Ngeru reported to have modelled reading and engaged the students about different texts, and this seemed to have a positive effect on not only students willingness to read but also how they perceived themselves as readers. Drawing on the theoretical framework of third space, I was also able to realise that perhaps the traditional classroom set-up may not be the ideal space for effective or rather successful SSR-periods to happen. Students needed the comfort and relaxed nature that the home space provided to be able to read for pleasure, and the classroom (through no fault of Miss Gato) was incapable of providing this. The library revealed itself to be a possible 'third space' (ref), a site for the space between home and the traditional classroom and therefore a place where the ideal SSR-period might take place and participants can position themselves as not only active participants in this literacy event, but also as what they thought to be 'good readers'.

### **5.3. Limitations of the study**

Because of the scope and nature of the case study, description and analysis of the SSR periods in one class, in one middle-class school, the specific findings are not generalisable and cannot be applied to any other contexts. However, there are general principles that can be drawn from the data analysis which I will consider below. Further, Cattus Primary School, is a relatively elite public school in an affluent neighbourhood. The majority of South African schools are not like Cattus Primary (socioeconomically and also in terms of

resources), and so the findings of this study would differ in other contexts. Well-resourced schools with well-resourced libraries, like Cattus Primary, have the potential to create and foster a culture of reading that would not be immediately available or possible in schools lacking in the afore mentioned resources and personnel, further bridling the findings of this study.

#### **5.4. Recommendations for further research.**

Adaptations to the Sustained Silent Reading Program: This study, has shown that “what a teacher does during and after silent reading defines silent reading for the students” (Berglund et al., 1983: 537). Through no explicit fault of her own, Miss Gato was to able to always participate in the SSR-period as she had wanted to or in a manner that would make the sessions more beneficial for the students. Outside of the crucial need for modelling and creating an affective and calm environment to read in, it also became clear that this SSR-period needed to be prioritised in terms of time- that is, students needed a sufficient amount of uninterrupted time to *just* read. The students needed to have autonomous book selection without any possible condemnation or testing of what they have read. As per Worthy et. al, “students should read interesting and manageable texts every day, ideally at their independent or easy reading level” (2001: 337). Lastly, the students expressed the fact that a part of the SSR-period they felt was missing was the opportunity to share- both their books and their views regarding what they have read- an important feature of the SSR-period as per Lee-Daniels et al. (2000) who established that SSR-periods worked best when students were able to share their books with each other and their facilitators. As such, I have summarised adaptations that might better the SSR-period experience below:

1. The SSR-period should perhaps be held either in the middle of the school day or at the end of the school day, at the same time every day. The beginning of the school day proved to not be optimal as students either missed a good portion of the period due to lateness or being required to be elsewhere (like choir practice), or were not engaged because they were frequently interrupted by the morning announcements or administrative needs. Having the SSR-period at another time would also possibly free up the class teacher’s time so that they may partake in the SSR-period as a facilitator and model for reading and to have the pressures of administrative tasks to contend with.



2. Following on adaption 1, the class teacher or adult present *must* read during the SSR-period as teacher involvement is crucial to how students act and feel during these periods.
3. The library lessons should be utilised as a means to help students learn how to choose appropriate and enjoyable books. Book selection can be made in to a fun and collaborative exercise which could also then potentially free up time for the students who scramble during the SSR-periods to find *any* book to have in front of them.
4. After or during the SSR-periods, time should be set aside for the students to discuss their books or what they have read with each other or their teacher.
5. Finally, students should be able to utilise the classroom space during the SSR-period to make the experience more of a comfortable one- students shouldn't be required to sit at their desks as they would during a normal school day.

More research however, in South Africa particularly, needs to be done on not only SSR-periods and how to effectively implement them into the school day and eventually curriculum but also about the broader possible consequences implementing these periods can have on student's conceptions of themselves as readers as well as academic implications. That is, research surrounding the length of the SSR-period, the time of day and finally the space of the SSR-period could be done in the context of South African schools to make implementing such reading programs easier. Further, more comprehensive research needs to be conducted on the role of the library and librarian in school's both in terms of fostering a reading culture as well as acting as a possible supplement to SSR-periods and in class reading. The possibility of the school's librarian of creating a strong reading culture can be noted when regarding the librarians at Miv and Iring Primary schools, two schools that also conduct SSR-periods,(Appendix 11 and 12). Further research could show the value, outside of these contexts, of reading for pleasure in educational and assessment contexts which in turn might contribute to fostering a culture of reading among young people in South Africa.

## Chapter 6. Bibliography

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Principal Information Sheet

Dear Mrs Misik,

#### **A Case Study of School Reading Practices During Sustained Silent Reading Periods at a Western Cape Primary School**

I, Shadi Motjuwadi, am currently a Masters in Education student at the University of Cape Town. I would like to ask for your permission to carry out research for my thesis dissertation on the reading practices during Sustained Silent Reading periods in a grade 4 classroom at your school. My research aims to explore reader motivation and practices (of both the students and the teacher present) during the SSR-periods over 4 cycles.

It has been documented that literacy, particularly reading is a key resource in not only the academic (or primary and secondary) setting but also in later years. Reading therefore has 'cognitive consequences' that extend beyond just the classroom setting and academic success- literacy has become a vital component to ensuring economic competition and as such reading, or rather literacy is a highly valuable, if not necessary, human skill. It is therefore small wonder that poor levels in achievement in literacy (and numeracy) are usually shown in the light of a national crisis. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) addresses this problem and aims to remedy it in their weekly (literacy) requirements. To accommodate for the crucial role literacy plays in overall learning, the department have allocated a significant amount of time to literacy learning. The CAPS document goes so far as mentioning and even promoting independent reading as something teachers should encourage students to do in "any spare time that they have" as a means of fostering literacy and learning to read, but doesn't elaborate on what exactly independent reading comprises of and how it should be done. I am interested in this 'gap' in policy. Although CAPS requires that time be allocated for independent reading it is not always the case that this happens, and when it does it is never specified what is required of both the students and teachers. It is my hope that in observing what happens in these sustained silent reading periods, that is independent reading, (albeit on a small-scale) my

study will contribute towards our understanding of sustained silent reading in the school setting as well as understanding reader motivation.

During this period, I hope to collect the following data:

- Class teacher interview: I wish to conduct two semi-structured interviews (20-30minutes each) with the students' teacher. Although there will be a set number of questions for the teacher to answer, the interview needn't follow a particularly rigid structure.
- School librarian interview: I will conduct one 20-30minute, semi-structured interview with the school librarian to gage the student's reading habits and preferences.
- Classroom observation during SSR-periods: I will observe 4-5 SSR periods. The first will be to familiarise both myself and the students and the remainder will be to gather data.
- Focus groups of students in the classroom: Because of the study's scale, it is not feasible to interview the students individually. To overcome this, I wish to conduct two sets of focus groups of five students per group (30 mins in length each). The first acting as an introductory discussion and the second used to elicit the students specific viewpoints regarding the study's questions. Students are free to join or abstain from these groups.

Participation is voluntary and the confidentiality of the school, as well as the teachers and learners, is guaranteed. The school will be given a pseudonym (different name) and pseudonyms will be used for all participants in the writing up of the research. You may withdraw permission for conducting the research at any time.

You are welcome to ask or send through any questions regarding this research by telephone or email to [shadimotjuwadi@yahoo.com](mailto:shadimotjuwadi@yahoo.com); [mtjdor002@myuct.ac.za](mailto:mtjdor002@myuct.ac.za) or 0832639986 or to my supervisor Carolyn McKinney.

Yours sincerely,

Shadi Motjuwadi (mtjdor002)

## **Appendix 2**

### **Teacher Information Sheet**

Dear Mrs/Ms/Mr

#### **A Case Study of School Reading Practices During Sustained Silent Reading Periods at a Western Cape Primary School**

I, Shadi Motjuwadi, am currently a Masters in Education student at the University of Cape Town. I would like to ask for your permission to carry out research for my thesis dissertation on the reading practices during Sustained Silent Reading periods in your grade 6 classroom. My research aims to explore reader motivation and practices (of both the students and the teacher present) during the SSR-periods over 4 cycles.

It has been documented that literacy, particularly reading is a key resource in not only the academic (or primary and secondary) setting but also in later years. Reading therefore has 'cognitive consequences' that extend beyond just the classroom setting and academic success- literacy has become a vital component to ensuring economic competition and as such reading, or rather literacy is a highly valuable, if not necessary, human skill. It is therefore small wonder that poor levels in achievement in literacy (and numeracy) are usually shown in the light of a national crisis. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) addresses this problem and aims to remedy it in their weekly (literacy) requirements. To accommodate for the crucial role literacy plays in overall learning, the department have allocated a significant amount of time to literacy learning. The CAPS document goes so far as mentioning and even promoting independent reading as something teachers should encourage students to do in "any spare time that they have" as a means of fostering literacy and learning to read, but doesn't elaborate on what exactly independent reading comprises of and how it should be done. I am interested in this 'gap' in policy. Although CAPS requires that time be allocated for independent reading it is not always the case that this happens, and when it does it is never specified what is required of both the students and teachers. It is my hope that in observing and trying to understand what happens in these sustained silent reading periods, that is independent reading, (albeit on a small-scale) the move towards understanding reader motivation and the current 'literacy crisis' can be made.

In terms of data collection, I hope to achieve the following:

- Class teacher interview: I wish to conduct two semi-structured interviews (20-30minutes each) with you. Although there will be a set number of questions for you to answer, the interview needn't follow a rigid structure.
- School librarian interview: I will conduct one 20-30minute, semi-structured interview with the school librarian to gauge the student's reading habits and preferences.
- Classroom observation during SSR-periods: I will observe 4-5 SSR periods. The first will be to familiarise both myself and the students and the remainder will be to gather data.
- Focus groups of students in the classroom: Because of the study's scale, it is not feasible to interview the students individually. To overcome this, I wish to conduct focus groups. I wish to conduct two sets of focus groups of five students per group (30 mins in length each)- like I had done in the interview. The first acting as an introductory discussion and the second used to elicit the students specific viewpoints regarding the study's questions. Like the interview, I will have a set of questions to initiate discussion and will be in charge of facilitating said discussion but the power in terms of dialogue/discussion direction generally lies with the students. Students are free to join or abstain from these groups.

Participation is voluntary and the confidentiality of the school, as well as the teachers and learners, is guaranteed. The school will be given a pseudonym (different name) and pseudonyms will be used for all participants in the writing up of the research. You may withdraw permission for conducting the research at any time.

You are welcome to ask or send through any questions regarding this research by telephone or email to [shadimotjuwadi@yahoo.com](mailto:shadimotjuwadi@yahoo.com); [mtjdor002@myuct.ac.za](mailto:mtjdor002@myuct.ac.za) or 0832639986.

Yours sincerely,

Shadi Motjuwadi (mtjdor002)

**Appendix 3****Student Consent Form****Consent Form****A Case Study of School Reading Practices During Sustained Silent Reading Periods  
at a Western Cape Primary School**

Child Participant Name: (Print)

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(Signature)

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(Date)

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I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to being observed in the classroom during Sustained Silent Reading Periods as well as being interviewed and audio-taped/recorded during both focus group sessions.

I understand that I can take part if I want to and that my confidentiality will be maintained. I can withdraw my participation at any time.



## **Appendix 4**

### **Parent Information Sheet**

Dear Mrs/Ms/Mr

#### **A Case Study of School Reading Practices During Sustained Silent Reading Periods at a Western Cape Primary School**

I, Shadi Motjuwadi, am currently a Masters in Education student at the University of Cape Town. I would like to ask for your permission to carry out research for my dissertation on the reading practices during Sustained Silent Reading periods in your child's grade 5 classroom. My research aims to explore reader motivation and practices (of both the students and the teacher present) during the SSR-periods over 4 cycles.

It has been documented that literacy, particularly reading is a key resource in not only the academic (or primary and secondary) setting but also in later years. Reading therefore has 'cognitive consequences' that extend beyond just the classroom setting and academic success- literacy has become a vital component to ensuring economic competition and as such reading, or rather literacy is a highly valuable, if not necessary, human skill. It is therefore small wonder that poor levels in achievement in literacy (and numeracy) are usually shown in the light of a national crisis. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) addresses this problem and aims to remedy it in their weekly (literacy) requirements. To accommodate for the crucial role literacy plays in overall learning, the department have allocated a significant amount of time to literacy learning. The CAPS document goes so far as mentioning and even promoting independent reading as something teachers should encourage students to do in "any spare time that they have" as a means of fostering literacy and learning to read, but doesn't elaborate on what exactly independent reading comprises of and how it should be done. I am interested in this 'gap' in policy. Although CAPS requires that time be allocated for independent reading it is not always the case that this happens, and when it does it is never specified what is required of both the students and teachers. It is my hope that in observing what happens in these sustained silent reading periods, that is independent reading, (albeit on a small-scale) my study will contribute towards our understating of sustained silent reading in the school setting as well as understanding reader motivation.

Aside from the data I will collect from the class teacher, I hope to collect the following data involving your child:

- Classroom observation during SSR-periods: I will observe 4-5 SSR periods. The first will be to familiarise both myself and the students and the remainder will be to gather data.
- Focus groups of students in the classroom: Because of the study's scale, it is not feasible to interview the students individually. To overcome this, I wish to conduct two sets of focus groups of five students per group (30 mins in length each). The first acting as an introductory discussion and the second used to elicit the students specific viewpoints regarding the study's questions. Students are free to join or abstain from these groups.

Participation is voluntary and the confidentiality of the school, as well as the teachers and your child(ren), is guaranteed. The school will be given a pseudonym (different name) and pseudonyms will be used for all participants in the writing up of the research. You may withdraw permission for conducting the research at any time.

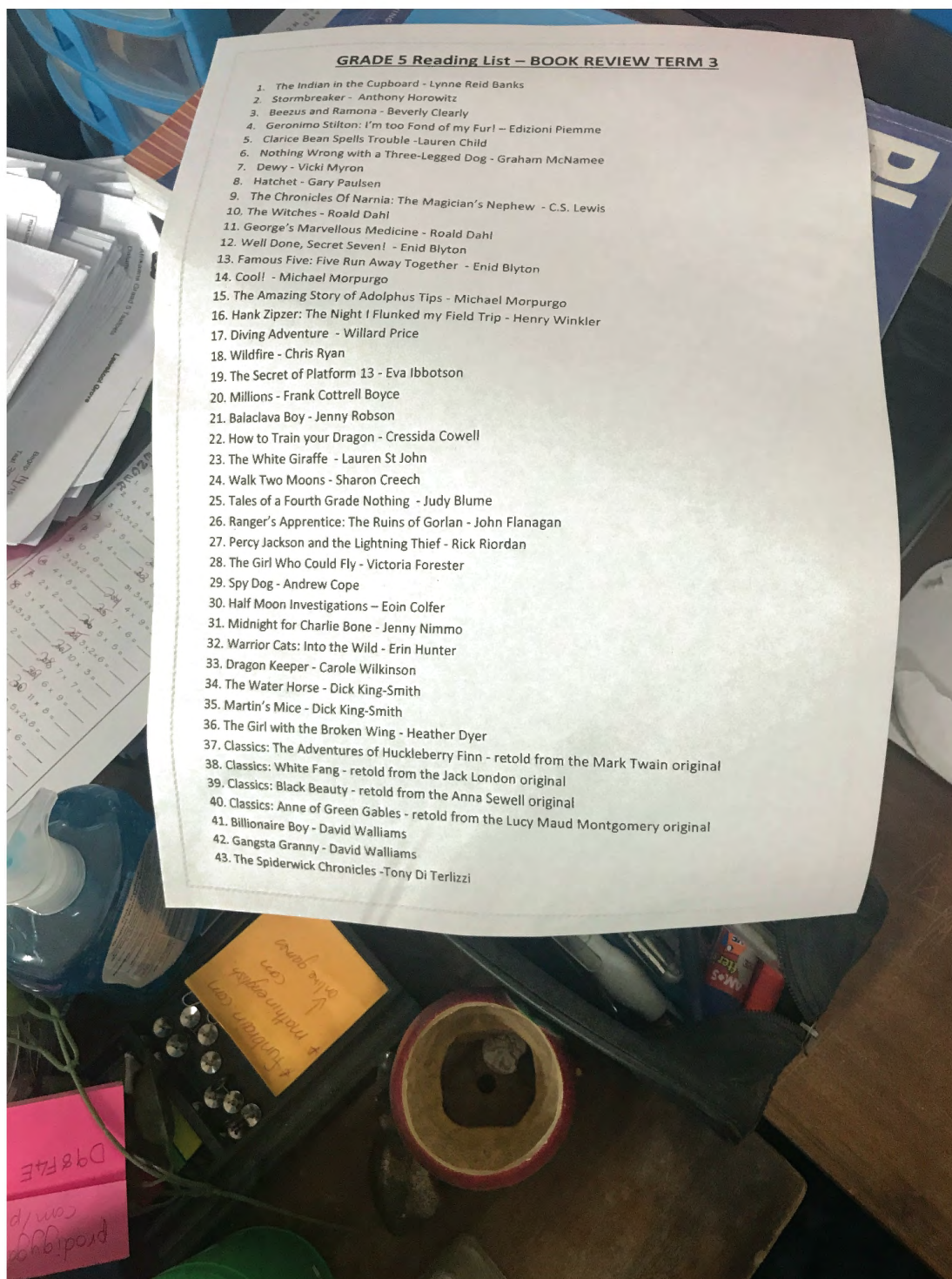
You are welcome to ask or send through any questions regarding this research by telephone or email to [shadimotjuwadi@yahoo.com](mailto:shadimotjuwadi@yahoo.com); [mtjdor002@myuct.ac.za](mailto:mtjdor002@myuct.ac.za) or 0832639986 or my supervisor Prof. Carolyn McKinney at [carolyn.mckinney@uct.ac.za](mailto:carolyn.mckinney@uct.ac.za).

Yours sincerely,

Shadi Motjuwadi (mtjdor002)

## Appendix 5

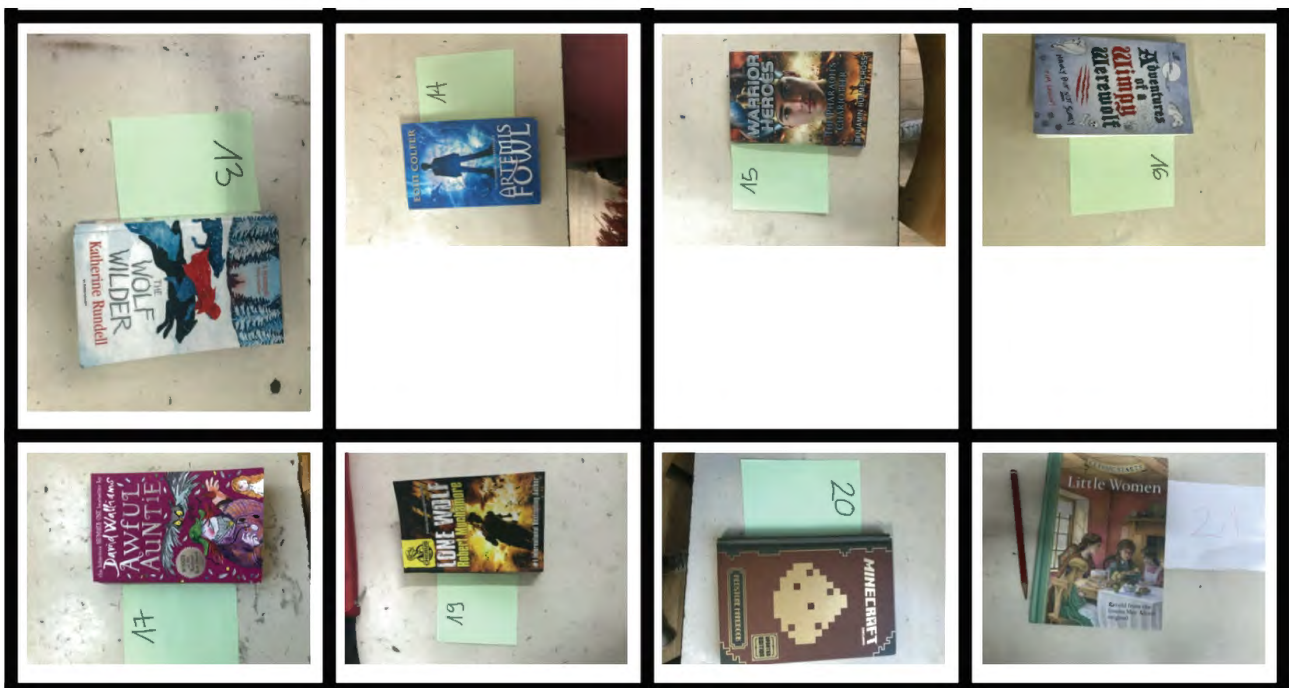
### Cattus Primary Grade 5 Book Review Reading List





## Appendix 6

### Students' books read during observation





**Appendix 7****Questionnaires completed by the grade 5 students**

Questionnaire for Grade 5 Class

**Student Name:**

*Before we begin with the questionnaire, I would like to say thank you so much for allowing me to observe and interview you! I really enjoyed my time with you guys. Another thing to note, when I talk about books, I am not only talking about fiction books. 'Books' can include any genre (example: comics, graphic novels, non-fiction books etc) and any length (example: short stories, longer novels, magazines etc). You don't have to complete the questionnaire – just leave it blank if you prefer not to.*

1. During the silent reading periods at the beginning of the day, what kinds of books do you enjoy reading?

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2. Do you find that you read the same kinds of books at home? If not, why do you think this is?

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3. How often do you think you read outside of school purely for enjoyment?

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4. What kind of environment do you prefer reading in? Do you prefer quiet or are you fine with outside noises? Do you prefer to be seated at a table or desk or would you rather lie down when reading?

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5. Do you prefer reading by yourself or as part of a group when outside of school? Why?

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6. Over the past year, what have been your top five favourite books?

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7. Finally, what is it about the books (mentioned above) that you enjoy so much?

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## **Appendix 8**

### **Focus group interview with students at Cattus Primary School**

1. Shadi: [Brief introduction and formalities] How long have you been at Cattus Primary?
2. Student 1: Since grade one.
3. Student 2: Grade R.
4. Student 3: Grade one as well.
5. Student 4: I came in the second term of grade two.
6. Student 6,7 and 8: Grade R
7. Student 5: Student 2 and I first met in grade two.
8. Shadi: Okay, and how long would you say you've been doing the silent reading (periods) for?
9. Student 5: Oh! Ever since the second grade... =
10. [Group starts debating amongst themselves how long they have participated in SSR-periods.]
11. Student 5: = Wait, what do you mean "silent reading thing"?
12. Shadi: Well, the 'thing' at the beginning of the period where you guys sit down and read...?
13. Student 1: Yes, it's been going since grade R.
14. [general group consensus]
15. Student 5: I used to have that since grade 2... since I only came to the school in grade two (inaudible).
16. Student 2: Ja, since grade two I think.
17. Student 3: Well, the thing is the whole school's being doing it since grade R so...
18. Shadi: Okay, and when you guys aren't doing these silent reading periods how do you feel about reading? Do you enjoy it...?
19. (General murmurs of agreement)
20. Student 4: I enjoy it a lot but they seem to shorten it down.
21. Student 6: I only enjoy certain books, like, adventure type of books.
22. Student 5: I read drama!
23. Shadi: Right, and do they allow you to read those types of books in silent reading period...?
24. Student 6: I only enjoy books that interest me.
25. Student 7: The thing is I don't like silent reading because when you get to the good part of the book then they say "Books away!"



26. Student 4: (in response to student 7) I'm like 'noooooo'!
27. (Group laughter)
28. Shadi: Okay, so do you guys feel that the silent reading periods are too short then?
29. Student 6: Way too short! =
30. Student 1: Ja! Way too short!
31. (General agreement from the group)
32. Student 5: They made it much shorter than last time.
33. Shadi: Last time?
34. Student 5: No, last time I mean last year.
35. (Aside) Student 2: Let me guess, you want to be a teacher?
36. (Aside) Shadi: (Laughs) Um, I'm already a teacher.
37. Student 3: Last year it was twenty minutes.
38. Student 5: Last year they would have a specific amount of time and they would never ever change it but here they might even make it about five minutes.
39. Student 1: It is five minutes. Last year we had twenty minutes.
40. Student 2: No, we didn't.
41. Student 8 bickering with student 2: It was twenty minutes. It was!
42. Student 4: Ja we gotta have twenty minutes or more than twenty minutes.
43. (inaudible)
44. Student 5: We always had five minutes to calm us down though /.../
45. Student 1: Ja, after break.
46. Student 7: That was Miss Dimeti's class though.
47. Shadi: Oh, so they don't do that this year?
48. Group: No.
49. Shadi: So, it's different from teacher to teacher then?
50. Student 3: Ja, but it was the same with Miss Biralas as well?
51. Student 5: It's much much different from Miss Biralas though.
52. Student 4: I think it's because we have more work to do now that's why we maybe have less time.
53. Shadi: Okay /.../ And were you guys all in the same class last year or did you have different teachers?
54. Group: No, (inaudible).
55. Student 2: Nope, different teachers!
56. Student 7: Me... Me and (student 4) were in the same class.

57. Student 1: (gesturing to students 5 and 6) We've been in the same class since grade two. =
58. Student 2: Ah, that's so cute. Not! (laughter)
59. Student 3: I was in Miss Birala's class last year.
60. Student 8: I was in no-one's class since last year. (laughter)
61. Student 5: Weren't you in my class in grade two?
62. Student 8: No, never. This is the first time we're together.
63. Student 4: We always have been in kinda the same classes.
64. Shadi: (talking to student student 7 and 4) You two that were together, your teacher last year- how did she do silent reading?
65. Student 1: Whose class were you in?
66. Student 7: Miss Anu.
67. Student 4: She did it really nicely!
68. Student 2: I was also with her.
69. Student 7: She was awesome!
70. Shadi: What made it awesome though?
71. Student 4: We got nice, long periods and sometimes we could have, like, some small chats. Mostly we would do fun reading and stuff.
72. Student 7: And then there was that animal card that we could swop books in the morning /.../
73. (Murmurs of agreement).
74. Student 3: That's the same as Miss Birala except Miss Birala was better because she let us... In the morning she let us play games instead of reading. If we wanted to we could.
75. Shadi: Okay! So you didn't *have to* read in the morning?
76. Student 4: No, we never had to do anything.
77. Shadi: Alright, and writing? Does Miss Gato (the class teacher) allow you guys to write during these periods?
78. Group: NO!
79. Student 6: Not at all, no no no! (laughter)
80. Shadi: But would you guys like to write?
81. Group: Yes!
82. Shadi: What though?
83. Student 2: Write but even like drawing. I love drawing stories.

84. Student 5: Probably because sometimes if we don't have a book like I just told you now (referring to a conversation she and I had had in the hallway before the focus group), it would be a good idea if you had a second option to not get in trouble.
85. Student 2: I have three books in my bag, you could have asked me.
86. Student 1: In grade four um... In grade four we used to do creative writing and write stories about our weekend and our holiday.
87. Student 6: Oh ja! I remember that!
88. Student 1: That was my favourite part.
89. Student 4: I'm okay with creative writing, it's just that it took me really long to do it.
90. Student 8: I loved it because whenever we had free time, =
91. Student 2: Nope, nope I hated that.
92. Student 3: Whenever we had time Miss Birala would allow us to do whatever we wanted.
93. Student 5: I wrote stories for the class to read last year.
94. Student 8: I prefer reading the stories sometimes not writing them. (laughter)
95. Student 7: But you should've saw [sic]! We were even allowed to listen to music but it had to be a certain kind of music. If we searched our music it wouldn't basically go in, it was only certain types of music. So we were only allowed to listen to certain kinds of music.
96. Student 4: Actually we were allowed to listen to whatever music, =
97. Student 7: On '123music'.
98. Student 4: = Ja, on '123music' but actually Soundcloud is better than '123music'.
99. Shadi: Okay, so if we were to compare creative writing to reading- which would you prefer?
100. (inaudible)
101. Shadi: Wait- you'll have to do a show of hands. So hands up if you prefer writing.
102. (five students raise their hands)
103. Shadi: So, the rest are reading...?
104. Student 1: Ja, cause basically creative writing you can make up a story and it's about your holiday and life and you can give so much expression and some books can be really boring.
105. Student 6: (murmurs in agreement with student 1).
106. Student 5: I'd rather read the stories that people write.
107. Student 6: I'd rather write my own story because it's based on what happened... and it's a true story.

- 108.Student 2: It doesn't have to be true.
- 109.Shadi: Yes, that brings me to my next question! What kind of books do you guys go for? Fiction, non-fiction, or...?
- 110.Student 7: I normally go with fiction.
- 111.Student 3: I love fantasy.
- 112.Student 4: A mixture. So it's like in the real world. So it's non-fiction in fiction.
- 113.Student 5: I'm obsessed with fantasy.
- 114.Student 1: We really like creative books. /.../ Basically, I think all of us like creative books, legends... and drama.
- 115.Student 8: I think most of us would like, um, books that give us legends but are very short. So a good series would be 'Classic Starts'.
- 116.Student 5: I don't like short books!
- 117.Student 8: No, it's legends but just shortened.
- 118.Student 5: Oh, 'cause I don't like short books at all, =
- 119.Student 8: It's really not that short, it's probably like two hundred pages
- 120.Student 5: = it's really annoying when they end.
- 121.Student 2: How is that short? (laughter)
- 122.Student 6: I like short books because sometimes you can just read and then let book go.
- 123.Student 5: But that's super annoying, I never want it to end.
- 124.Shadi: Okay, in terms of short books, does Miss Gato allow you guys to read short books or things like comics? Do you want to read comics...?
- 125.Student 2: I love comics!
- 126.Student 4: No! Not at all. In first term we used to read like those magazines but we're not allowed to anymore we have to read, like, real books.
- 127.Shadi: Why?
- 128.Student 2: I know why.
- 129.Student 5: And if we don't have the books we have to read the magazines and I've read all of them!
- 130.Student 2: I know why because I think apparently next term we're doing a book review.
- 131.Shadi: Mmh...
- 132.Student 1: (Gasps) Oh, yes!
- 133.Shadi: And have you guys read some of the books (needed for the review)?
- 134.Student 5: We're doing the book review now.

135. Student 7: No we're not, now we're *planning*.
136. Student 3: We first need to read the book during the holiday...
137. Student 8: I'm already doing one book for the book review, /.../
138. (inaudible talking amongst themselves about the books to read)
139. Shadi: Okay, so the style of the way you guys read. I mean, the way you sit at desks and it's very quiet- do you prefer this or sitting in groups or sitting on the floor?
140. Student 8: I prefer sitting in groups and talking to each other sometimes.
141. Shadi: Why talking though?
142. Student 4: Because we like to discuss our books with each other. So that we can say 'look how funny this one page is' or whatever.
143. Student 5: I like this idea but I prefer sitting on my own because I find it really annoying when everyone starts chatting and talking when one person is reading and it's really hard 'cause there's one person reading.
144. Student 1: If you're in a group it's different though.
145. Student 7: Or like we can even do book swaps.
146. Shadi: Ah, so you guys prefer that thing where you can collaborate?
147. Student 4: Ja, if you have the same book as someone else you can ask each other what page you're on, what's happening with a friend...
148. Student 2: Like, in English... We were all reading the same book together at the same time and our English teacher asked about what we thought was happening and why it was happening. And we all spoke about it with each other and were all laughing and it was fun. That's why I really liked it.
149. Student 3: But also the thing is I am really fast reader and everyone reads at their own pace. So by the time I am at the end of the book everyone is only halfway and I find it really annoying. Also, I really hate dramatic ones, they're cheesy when it's too obvious, it's so annoying /.../
150. Shadi: So genre is really important.
151. Student 3: Really obvious like, (mock British accent) "He got hit, what is he going to do in his coma?!" He's going to wake up- it's so obvious!
152. Student 7: (laughs) Ja!
153. Student 1: You never know, some books they actually never wake up.
154. Student 2: Emotional books be like, 'I have one hundred and fifty pages to talk about my feelings, let's use a hundred to talk about how I feel!' (laughter)
155. Student 6: Oh my gosh, emotional books are so emotional for me. I almost, like, start crying. I'm tearing up right now!

- 156.(inaudible mocking of student 6 and her choice in genre)
- 157.Shadi: Okay guys! So, generally in terms of readers... I have been watching you guys this school week and *I think* you're all really good readers. What do you think good readers do?
- 158.Student 2: They read. That's it- just read.
- 159.Student 5: They read in a quiet area.
- 160.Student 1: They read the book but then they think about what they've just read.
- 161.Student 8: So basically what student 1 said, they read the book and they understand what's happening and they take in what they're reading.
- 162.Student 4: They read whenever they can and then they get their books taken away!  
(laughter)
- 163.Shadi: So you think that good readers read a lot and quite frequently?
- 164.Student 4: Yes and in their own time.
- 165.Student 1: Ja, in their own time and some readers like to calm themselves down by reading.
- 166.Student 5: When they read they think strategically.
- 167.Shadi: What do you mean by that?
- 168.Student 5: Well, exactly what student 1 said- to calm yourself down, these are the things to wipe people's heads /.../
- 169.Student 7: To like get rid of the stress.
- 170.Student 6: It's like a solution to calm them down.
- 171.Student 2: But the thing is some people do read when they're stressed and there's like this new thing called a fidget spinner comes out and most people feel less stressed when they use it.
- 172.Student 5: Not me though!
- 173.Student 2: When some people read they might feel a little bit stressed and they would want to use it to help.
- 174.Shadi: True. So do you guys think you're good readers?
- 175.Students 8,7,6,5,4 and 3: Yes!
- 176.Student 2: No.
- 177.Shadi: Why?
- 178.Student 2: Because I don't like reading that much.
- 179.Student 5: Yes! I love reading, I'm obsessed with reading.
- 180.Shadi: And the rest of you?
- 181.Student 1: Kind of, I just don't really like being asked about it or tested.

182.Shadi: So you'd rather just read by yourself for fun?

183.Student 1: I think so.

184.(Student 5 engages in a conversation with student 6 and 4 about the sadness that comes with books ending and having to say goodbye to characters).

185.Shadi: [ending remarks]

## **Appendix 9**

### **Interview with the teacher at Cattus Primary School**

1 Shadi: [Introduction] So, how long have you been teaching at Cattus Primary School?

2 Teacher: This would be my seventh year.

3 Shadi: Seven years... And have they always done the silent reading periods or is it something new?

4 Teacher: Yes, they have. We stopped it for one year when CAPS came in and we didn't have time for it but everybody complained and we brought it back the following year.

[NOTE: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) was introduced into the school education system in 2012.]

5 Shadi: Okay and regarding that, do you agree with CAPS' guidelines regarding reading and the genres they'd like the kids to read, and the amount of time it should take place per week or would you prefer something different?

6 Teacher: Um, there's a lot I disagree with granted but I think I do agree with what they want with reading but I'm not happy with their choices with reading (genre) especially in their rainbow or rather GDE books because I think that they underestimate the child. The average child is reading at a far higher level than what they expect the children to be reading at.

7 Shadi: Okay, so was this the first time you encountered the [SSR-periods] when you came to Cattus Primary?

8 Teacher: No.

9 Shadi: So it happened at your old school as well?

10 Teacher: Yes /.../

11 Shadi: How do you feel about these periods? Do you think them necessary?



12 Teacher: I think the time of the day is important. I don't think it is optimal to have it at the beginning of the day. I think we try and use the SSR-period as an admin period slash reading period slash everything, whereas if you have it for example after break where they've come in quite wild and you need to calm them down, I think that would be a more optimal time of the day. But the CAPS curriculum is so huge and there's no time to do it as a separate, so it's the best alternative to do it (this way) and try fit it in. To fit it in we have taken two minutes off of every lesson to try and fit the silent reading period.

13 Shadi: Oh, wow. What do you think the general attitude towards reading is with the students in your class?

14 Teacher: I think you get two types of reader, I think you get the type that read every moment they possibly can... while you're trying to teach and at break time etcetera. Then you get the type that silent reading is always going to be a chore [for] and it doesn't matter what you do it's not going to be of benefit. Well, it's going to be of benefit but you're going to be fighting with them every single lesson.

15 Shadi: Alright, sorry and just to go back... I just wanted to find out the story behind the desk lay-out? Why is it like this? Does it change all the time? [NOTE: The desk lay-out changed once during my observation time].

16 Teacher: Yes, so we actually are trying something new this term. The structure of the desks in rows and everything else is quite... limiting, and so to make more space in the classroom /.../ Um, that's why I've shifted all the desks to the side of the classroom so that we have more time to sit together. For lessons we've got a time then to divide into smaller groups, so that we can give more attention to those that need it because they're struggling or give more time to those that need an extension. So, this seems to work better. Also, most of them are facing a wall, which means they're not distracted by each other and they're not distracted by outside as much. So, it's almost like a little cubicle.

17 Shadi: Okay, and then where do the students' texts come from? Is there a reliance on the library or are they from home?

18 Teacher: It's a combination. I think firstly we have a phenomenal librarian and library, so she puts out a lot of books [and] she talks to them every week, they have a thirty minute lesson in the library- it's an additional to CAPS again, and she talks about books. She encourages them to read books, she highlights new books, the kids highlight to each other as well... so, they see what they're reading and feed off each others ideas and then obviously some of it comes from home. We also have a Readathon, so the Readathon is coming up next term and there again in the Readathon the children are encouraged to read extensively over a limited period of time.

19 Shadi: Okay, so one more thing. About the SSR-periods, are the students required to the texts to completion or can they bring a different book everyday? What is required of them?

20 Teacher: There's no requirement of them- the only requirement is that they sit and read. So, there are some children that you know are just grabbing a book off the shelf everyday and they're reading just because they're being told to read, they're not really taking in what they're reading. At the beginning of the year I say read magazines as well just to get them to read anything but then you soon notice there are some children that never pick up a book, and only ever read magazines... So, I try and encourage them that they read. Some teachers have different days of the week where for example, one teacher I know has an 'Afrikaans Day' where they have to read Afrikaans books during reading period and there are some teachers in the lower grades as well that do a 'Read Aloud Day'. So, the teacher will read aloud [to the students]. I've tried that, the difficulty of the senior grades is that you have other things happening during reading period as well so its quite difficult for those children that then miss out on it.

21 Shadi: And finally, what do you feel about reading?

22 Teacher: I love reading! So, I would be reading during SSR-period if I could, if I had the opportunity and if I didn't have admin, I would be reading with them and I think that's one of the disadvantages. I think sometimes that if the teacher were also reading as well, it might encourage the children to read and I do talk to them about books quite a lot and what they're reading and so forth. Grade 5 is also a tricky year, grade 6 is an easier year for reading. Grade 5 is a tricky year because the kids aren't children and they're not yet adults, and it's a very difficult year to find books. Some of the books, the content is too ad-

vanced for them but the quality of the vocabulary /.../ So, the quality of the vocabulary is too advanced but the story is probably right for them and other books you have the exact opposite where the vocabulary is quite babyish but that's all they can understand. So it's a difficult year which is why I think you've seen such a variety of books in the classroom. Grade 6 is an easier year because I think the children are that much more mature, especially in this school. So they are reading young adult books, so there's a larger variety of books. I think the librarian has also said that [after questioning about what kinds of books grade 5's read] grade 5 is such a difficult year. It's such a difficult year to try and pitch it and where to pitch it, so I mean we've got on our reading list we've got books that some grade 3's would read and we've also got books that some grade 6's and 7's would read, so it's where to pitch it...

[Ending remarks].

## **Appendix 10**

### **Interview with Cattus Primary School's Librarian.**

1Shadi: (Formal Introduction and explanation of the thesis focus and my interests.) How long have you worked at this school's library for?

2Librarian: For four years now.

3Shadi: (repetition of librarian's answer) Have you always been at the library?

4Librarian: I am a qualified teacher. I was a class teacher initially and then (I) got involved in the library. Before this, I was an 'at home mommy' for a while, so I have sort of come back to teaching this way.

5Shadi: Okay, and was this English (teaching) or another subject?

6Librarian: Oh yes, I was just a (...) primary school teacher, so I taught everything. I've got both library and teaching qualifications.

7Shadi: Okay, so the types of books that the kids take out from the library- what do they usually go for?

8Librarian: Well, at the moment it's mainly fiction. Ja. Which is really great because long ago we struggled to get boys to take out fiction, they were more the 'non-fiction guys'. Um, but I think that with all the new series out, once they're hooked they just keep going. So, at the moment ja- mainly fiction. There are some areas of non-fiction that are very popular, you know: pets, and the sports books, and baking, and... You know that kind of thing?

9Shadi: And, as you say with the boys and the girls- is there a very marked difference?

10Librarian: No, not really. Not here at Cattus Primary. Um, I find they, especially the girls, will read lots of fiction which you would think traditionally is boy's stuff. Um, not so much the other way round but there is the odd boy that'll want something I consider to be maybe a bit girly but it's fine, you know.

11Shadi: Ja, because I noticed especially in other schools in this case, boys don't tend to take books out as frequently or read (for pleasure) much. There seems to be almost a stigma around it, here (at Cattus Primary) it seems to be the other way round. [agreement from the librarian] Is that because of things like the book-drive and the 'Readathon'?

12Librarian: Ja, we have Readathon. Ja, well it might be... The idea of boys thinking that it is nerdish to read or whatever, I just think that children here at Cattus Primary are... Well, in fact the whole school (aim) is not to sort of stereotype children. So, it is not a case of you're a boy therefore you must read that, or you must do that, or your hair must be like that so ja. So, we really just aim to bring out the individual in the child. I think it maybe stems from that? So they don't see it as a 'nerdy' thing or whatever the case.

13Shadi: That's really nice and different... Oh, and I saw that there's other language sections (here) in the library. Is that ever touched or...?

14Librarian: Yes, the Afrikaans section is read quite extensively, in a sense maybe forced because I encourage the teachers to insist (the learners) that they have an Afrikaans book. So it's obviously at a very lower level... Then, there is a Xhosa section which is not used a lot, um... They're not encouraged to take one out, um so maybe I must work on the teachers and sort of... You know, even if we do grade by grade because there are not that many...

15Shadi: Okay... But is Xhosa a subject here (at Cattus Primary) or is it just English and Afrikaans?

16Librarian: No, no all three...

17Shadi: Okay, cool all three.

18Librarian: Ja, they do Xhosa from grade one.

19Shadi: Oh wow, great. And then, in terms of the silent reading periods... Are the children allowed to come here (to the library) and get the books during that period or are they encouraged to do it before...? What are the rules around that generally?

20 Librarian: They are encouraged to do it before. I'm finding that every now and again I've got to have a talk with the teachers just to remind them that we really want them to *read* during that period and not be wondering around the school. I feel that if they have finished a book rather send them (the students) here to get a new book but you do find the odd child where you think, "hmm! This child has been here like every morning a while and they mill around and they take their time..." So in those cases I chat to them (the teachers) and say, you know, don't send that child here because they're actually just using this period to parrot around and get out of reading. Ja, if the classroom is quiet and everyone is reading it just gives them (the students) a chance to get into that book. Um, whereas if they just take it home and, you know... There's so many other distractions and the book hasn't... Often they don't get far enough into it for it to grab them so...

21 Shadi: So, there's no sense of like... I don't know how to properly phrase this but, accountability maybe? Like, you don't have to read a book to completion. The focus is more on the fact that you actually just sit down and read?

22 Librarian: Not on a regular basis... For instance now the grade 5's have a list of books and they will have to choose a book off of that list and give a book report. Um, so usually there's one of those a year so that... Ja, the grade 4's do it, the grade 5's and 6's do it. I'm not sure about the grade 7's but it's a thing where they actually have to read off a list or an approved book by the teachers and then they do a full on book report. And what I did last year was quite nice too. I got them to do 'googledocs' with pictures and those sorts of things and we put it onto our library site, so they could access it and what have you. So there they are in a sense accountable and they have to actually answer to it. The other time is during Readathon. So that's a three week period next term and everything they read they've got to actually list and um, obviously I say to them 'if anything is on your list you must be able to answer for what you have read'- and I do do spot checks. It can be very time consuming...

23 Shadi: [laughter] I suppose it needs to be done.

24 Librarian: [laughter] Ja! But for the rest it's mainly for fun and I do, when they come for library every now and again, I just say 'Alright! Let's have a chat session. What have you been reading? What have I been reading? What I've got new in the library,' and that sort of thing. So it's quite nice. They actually really enjoy that sort of thing, hearing what... what

I've read, what's new and what they've each read. Quite a few of the children belong to public libraries, so there is a bit of a feeding of other stuff being read and... Some of them read on kindles and lots of children have parents here that are quite happy to go and buy them books, so...

25 Shadi: So with the library, sorry just to return to that... With the library periods, is it kind of a 'free-reign' thing or is there a set routine or schedule they stick to each week?

26 Librarian: No, it's not just free reign. I only have them for half an hour. I always give them a chance as part of that lesson to choose books, so browsing time but there is no syllabus for library (periods). So over the years, the first year I did it very much by feel as to what I thought they should be doing and for where they are and it's interesting as I'm going I'm starting things (with the children) earlier and earlier. You know, just because they can. So I do things like chatting about books, I might introduce them to an author and tell them a little bit about the author and then I might just show them a clip. I do the Dewey Decimal System, we do a lot about that, how the different books are organised and making sure I can give them the actual call number and they can then go and find the book on the shelf. Um, bibliographies- I teach them how to do bibliographies. *[interruption: three students entered looking to loan iPads from the library]*. Ja, so those sort of things I do with the higher up grades and then the lower grades- I always read to the grade 1's and 2's. Grade R to 2, I always read them a story but I also do things like turning pages correctly and looking after books and so on. We do things like terminology- the word 'author' and 'illustrate' and all that kind of thing. And then higher up I introduce them, the grade 3's and well I've actually started it with the grade 2's now, to fiction and the difference between a fiction book and a non-fiction book. We introduce those terms, um reference books I introduce them to...

27 Shadi: So you read to the lower grades but then with the higher grades, is there reading time for them during the library periods? For them just to sit and do their own thing

28 Librarian: It just depends on what I'm doing. I always try and say 'alright, you have five minutes to browse and go and find a book'. There is the odd time that I will just say, 'you know what? Let's just have a chill time, so find a book and sit down and read.' That is always quite difficult because in fact it takes them a while to settle and to actually engage and that's why I think this morning thing where it's an actual *routine* is so good. They know

the routine, 'unpack, sit down, start reading' and so on. So, it's interesting when I do it in library it sometimes takes a while for some children. For some children will immediately get the book and go (and find somewhere to read), and that's why I've got the couches because it's more relaxed. Some children enjoy just cuddling up with a blanket and lying on a couch, others prefer sitting at a table...

29 Shadi: True, but just to return, I heard you talking (to the other students) about iPads- there's different types of medias they can take out it's not just hardcopy or just books? They can take out iPads and download (different) books or...?

30 Librarian: They can't really... The iPads are mainly for use in class- (the ones loaned by the three students) are going off to a class. At break time I don't mind them using an iPad because to get onto our catalogue, I've used QR-codes and they can just go on, QR-code the thing and get onto (the school's library catalogue). So yes, they do use it for that. I do use the iPads during library time as well, like when we doing bibliographies. Instead of them writing on paper I'll say 'just use one of those notepad (applications on the iPad) and do it on there.' We have a library site and so yesterday I have just made it new and I gave them (the students) a link so they could have a look at it and give it a 'squizz' and work through it. So, I do use the iPads for that. I also use it for things like, Cahoot- you make questions and you play it as a game. It's very exciting and they get quite hyped about it but their learning but having while doing it. So sometimes when doing revision about the parts of the book or something really boring like that I'll do a Cahoot instead. So, a question comes up and then four possibilities or answers come up and then they have the iPad and they've got to tap on the right colour and then it times them and they really have fun. There's music that goes on while everything is happening and it's quite cool. So I use it for that and I use other things, there's an (application) called PadLit, and sometimes we do a bit or rather teach them a bit about things like Mythology. I'll read them a myth and discuss the difference between a myth and a legend, and then the grade 4's have been looking up how to use an index or a contents page but with the grade 5's they are going to do a Pad-Lit page. It's a thing on the internet but its like you make a wall. It's alms though you doing a graffiti thing, and they're going to do research on Roman gods and they can then do a post on the wall.

31 Shadi: That's really exciting with all the different genres...



32 Librarian: Yes! So the site that I've just made, I've got a thing where they can download eBooks but it's off Gutenberg- which is the free one and I am investigating having eBooks on there as well so that they have the option because I want to have an option for those children that maybe would be grabbed by an eBook instead of an actual book.

33 Shadi: Ja, I sometimes find that its less intimidating if it is not a hardcopy /.../

34 Librarian; Ja, and for me as long as they're reading I don't really mind what they're reading on or the format. So, there's less and less actual books being used for projects than in the old days. Lots of research is being done on the internet. There are still some areas where teachers will say 'give me a whole blockhead of books', but definitely way less...

35 Shadi: Great! I think that's about it. (Formalities).

[End of interview]

## **Appendix 11**

### **Electronic interview with Librarian 2 at Miv Primary School:**

#### **1. How long have you been teaching/working in a library?**

I have been working as a school librarian since the beginning of January 2017. I am a qualified Foundation Phase teacher and had no library or teaching experience prior to my current position.

#### **2. How long have you been working at this specific school?**

I have been in my current position for a year and three months.

#### **3. How do you, personally, view the school's reading culture? (I.e. Do you think there is a strong reading culture in the school?)**

I feel that there is a relatively strong reading culture at the school. We have a large library which is stocked with many good quality books. I have a large budget to buy interesting books that appeal to the learners and I often have girls coming into the library during break time to read. There is always a huge waiting list when I put new books on the shelves. We also have many bright display boards around the school which display motivational quotes or relay important information about clubs and societies. The learners have readers which are given to them as part of their English and Afrikaans subjects that they read over a set period of time.

#### **4. Do you think the school fosters said reading culture? If so, how?**

The school fosters a reading culture in a number of ways. We highlight special days in the year pertaining to reading such as World Book Day and famous authors birthdays. We have authors come to the school to promote their books and read to the learners and I often give the learners silent reading time for approximately ten minutes at the end of their library lesson. We also arrange a book drive once a year in which learners donate their old books from home for an underprivileged school in our area.

#### **5. To your knowledge, how long have the Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)-periods taken place at the school (if they do)?**

To the best of my knowledge, the Sustained Silent Reading periods that take place during class time are fit in between other classroom activities and usually last between 10 to 35 minutes. This takes place sporadically throughout the week. I also give my older

learners (Grade 4 to 6) silent reading time at the end of their library lesson with me for approximately ten minutes. My library lessons are half an hour once a week. With the younger grades, I always end the lesson by reading them a short story.

**6. To your knowledge, what happens during these SSR-periods?**

To the best of my knowledge, these periods take place if and when there is a gap in the school day. Learners can take out a book they have loaned from the library and read silently at their desks. The learners also have set readers for English and Afrikaans and are given time to read these on their own but I am not sure of the duration of these Sustained Silent Reading periods. Learners are also occasionally taken outside to read to each other in groups from whichever book they are currently reading.

**7. Do you find the SSR-periods to be at all beneficial to the students? If so, how/ why?**

Yes, I find these periods of silent reading immensely beneficial to the learners. In today's modern school schedule learners are often pressured by school workload and extra-mural responsibilities and I feel that often reading time can get neglected for other school activities. Carving out this time in the lesson provides the learners with a few moments of unpressured enjoyment with the book of their choice away from the distractions of technology.

**8. In terms of the SSR-periods, are the students allowed to come to the library and get the books during that period or are they encouraged to do it before? What are the rules around that generally?**

The learners have one half an hour lesson with me per week in which they can take out books. I am also open at second break to issue books and after school for an hour. The learners are not generally able to visit the library outside of these times unless there is a learner that was sick the previous day and was therefore unable to take a book out.

**9. In terms of the library, do you have times during the day when the students come through to the library? (Both in- and outside of class schedule? Can the students come to the library during their breaks/after school to read for pleasure?)**

See above.

Learners are encouraged to visit the library during second break or after school to take out books or to read. We have bean bags and quiet areas around the library that the learners can use if they wish.

**10. What would you typically do with the students during the designated library periods, (and why)? Do you read to them? Is any teaching being done? Is there a time for the students to read material of their choice individually and uninterrupted?**

Grade 1 to 3 visit me once a week for half an hour per class. During this, they take out a book and have a few minutes to read it at their table. I will then read them a story at the end of the lesson and occasionally discuss the basics of book care/basic book knowledge such as how to take books out, what an author and illustrator are, the various parts of the book such as the spine and the title etc. These are taught briefly and informally and are repeated throughout the year. Normally just before I read a story I will ask a learner a question such as “What do we call a person who draws the picture in a story?”. By the end of Grade 3, the learners know the basics of book care, can distinguish between the fiction and non-fiction section and have made a map of the library with all the relevant sections.

Grade 4 to 7 also visit me once a week for half an hour per class. Some lessons the learners will simply take out books and read silently. Sometimes I will read to them at the end of the lesson. I also teach them in more detail about fiction and non-fiction books, the Dewey Decimal system, research skills and book genres. Occasionally the learners do small group work projects such as book reviews or fun activities such as a library rules board game. These are normally a smaller element with the focus being on taking out books and reading time.

**11. When the students from Grade 4-6 come to the library, what kinds of books do they usually go for? (Please focus on intermediate grades)**

Grade 4 and 5 learners normally prefer funny books or classics. Books such as David Walliams’ Awful Auntie or Rat Burger are always a hit. Mystery books such as Nancy Drew or Scarlet and Ivy by Sophie Cleverly are also very popular. Books with an element of scary or supernatural are also often taken out such as Harry Potter or A Series of Unfortunate Events and there are still a large number of animal books taken out. The

Grade 4's really enjoy the Pony Club Secrets series. Non-fiction books that go out often are the books on animals such as puppies and kittens and books on crafts and hobbies such as ballet and athletics.

The Grade 6 and 7 learners are a bit more diverse. Many of the Grade 6 and 7 learners prefer books about growing up, friendships and love such as the Jacqueline Wilson books or the Geek Girl series by Holly Smale. Others prefer fantasy sci-fi books such as the Percy Jackson series, Lord of the Rings or Harry Potter. Some learners still enjoy books about animals but less so in the older grades. In term of non-fiction section, books about history such as WWII are very popular as well as books on unexplained mysteries and fact books.

**12. With reference to question 11, is there a marked difference between the types of books boys and girls typically go for? Please elaborate on why you think this is/ isn't so.**

As I work at an all-girls school I would not be able to give an accurate insight into this question.

**13. Aside from just genre, are there different language sections in the library? If so, why or why not?**

We have books in English and Afrikaans. We have a fairly extensive Afrikaans section, but the majority of the books are in English. These are the two languages currently offered at the school. I am currently working on developing an IsiXhosa section.

**14. With reference to question 13, do the students engage with said sections? Why/ why not?**

The Afrikaans section is used but not as regularly as the English section. I find that learners in Grades 5 to 7 are more likely to take out one Afrikaans book per week in order to practice their Afrikaans reading at home. I do however feel that the Afrikaans books that are taken out are seen as serving a more educational purpose rather than simply being taken out for enjoyment. The younger grades rarely ever take out Afrikaans books even though they are allowed to.

**15. Aside from English being the medium of instruction at the school, are there other languages taught to the students? What are they?**

Afrikaans is taught as the Second Additional Language.

**16. Generally speaking what would you say the demographics of the school are?  
(Both in terms of gender and race).**

I am working at an all-girls school. I am not able to give an accurate answer about the racial demographics.

**17. Finally, can you tell me about a time when you felt you had a really great session with the students? Why does this specific time stand out to you?**

One of my favourite sessions that stood out for me was also one of my first library lessons. I had changed some of the library rules and procedures and I wanted the learners to all come to grips with these new rules in a way that was fun and interactive.

I created a library rules board game. This involved crafting a board game that had a “path” made up of small squares that snaked across the board. Each board was numbered and had a corresponding card with a question on it as well as a fun penalty for any answer given by the learner that was incorrect. Questions such as “When do books need to be returned?” or “Where do you find the non-fiction section?” were designed to challenge the learners to remember the new library rules as well as the layout of the library. I also arranged some blocks that were “boobytrapped” and made the players move back a few paces or wait one turn without moving. Penalties for wrong answers involved things such as doing a chicken dance for your group or doing a lap of the library.

The learners were split into groups of four and the first learner to the finished block won a small prize. Learners took turns throwing the dice and moving as well as asking the questions from the cards. The learners had fun running around and being silly and as a result weren’t aware of the fact that they were also reading aloud to their peers, speed reading and reading for understanding all at the same time. This was an easy way to include repetition of the new library rules through fun group work without having to stand reading out the rules to the class which would have been boring and most likely ineffective. In this way, the learners could have fun and I could set down my expectations for the library clearly and effectively.

## **Appendix 12**

**Electronic interview with Librarian 3 at Iring Primary School:** (the questions asked in Appendix 10 are identical to those in Appendix 11).

1. I have been teaching for 31 years. I taught 14 years in Foundation phase and 17 years in the library. I am also a qualified remedial teacher and run my own little practice in the later afternoons.
2. For 17 years.
3. Yes, the children read a lot and the library is a busy place. Definitely the heart of the school. There is a high standard of reading at the school.
4. We place a great emphasis on reading and its importance for a child's success. We are fortunate to be in an area where most parents encourage reading and are readers themselves. Comprehension skills are very important and emphasis is placed on this as well as listening skills.
5. We don't have a set SSR time at the school. Each grade plans it their way. Some have it first session in the morning while the teacher is doing admin. Others have it straight after first break. Others have it during the last 15 minutes of the day. Personally, silent reading is not for all children. Some prefer reading aloud. In the library, when we have quiet reading time, I read as well. It is good for the children to see what I am reading and that I enjoy reading too. The teacher must live a reader's life! Some children prefer reading aloud and as I was one as a child, I can relate to this. Sometimes I give them a choice and the few who prefer reading aloud, sit just outside the library in the garden.
6. Personally, in the classroom I often wonder if all children are reading especially if the teacher is busy on admin. The teacher should be reading too or taking an interest in what the children are reading.
7. These times can be beneficial if conducted correctly. In Foundation Phase, much emphasis is placed on group reading, paired and shared reading and reading to parents who volunteer. It is in the Grade 6 and 7 senior phase, that I question if it is beneficial enough. Time to read is important but the teacher must get involved in what the children are reading and the children must see the teacher reading too. Time to share about what you are reading is important too. During this time children must be able to

read what they love and the level must be ignored. This way the teacher creates a reading time for pleasure and not punishment.

8. They don't come during that time unless they have left their book at home or need a new one and did not manage to come during the other times. Otherwise the whole reading time is taken up selecting a book.

9. They are encouraged to come before school, at break or after school or during their library lesson time.

10. This depends on the grade. Being a qualified teacher, I get involved with the curriculum.

I read aloud to the Grade 1 and 2's each week. They come after school to take out books so I can spend their lesson time reading to them. I also send book loans of 40 books to each teacher for a period of 6 weeks. I expect the teacher to read these books to the children plus the children get time to browse these books too. Grade 3's – take out books every week plus I also do 2 listening skills a term with them. I also do various activities with them related to their curriculum e.g. when they are learning about sea creatures, I normally do reading of poetry on sea creatures which they love. Grade 4 – 6: I have for an hour every second week. During this time they select books; I introduce new books to them and read extracts; various reading activities and project research takes place; time for quiet reading or browsing and sharing (when they may talk); literature quiz sessions individual and in groups; visiting authors and interesting talks.

11. Mainly fiction books as well as graphic novels. These are a few examples of books that are very popular for Grade 4 and 5 students: Dogman; Wimpy Kid: Horrid Henry; Dick King – Smith's books; How to Train Your Dragon Series; Will Solve it Series; World of Norm; Awesome Animal Series; Spy Pup Series; Spy Dog Series; David Walliams books. Grade 6 and 7, a few examples: Time Riders; Geek Girls; Chris Ryan books; Master Minds; Gone series; Lauren St John's books [....]

12. This depends on the child. Some girls like to read the books that the boys enjoy reading but not the other way around.

13. Yes. Afrikaans and a small Xhosa section.

14. Very little. Have to constantly encourage.



15. Afrikaans and Xhosa.
16. Gender about 50/50 and Race 80% white.
17. Many times. I will include my library Week activities (*Appendix 12*) for you to see what fun they have in the library.

## **Appendix 13**

### **Library week activities from Iring Primary School:**

#### **Celebrating Library Week 2018**

#### **'Library – The Heart of the School'**

Dear Judges

As one week is very short for all the activities we wanted to cover, our activities took a little longer than a week. Here are some of the activities we included during this time.

1. **Twilight Tales** for the little ones.  
The little ones arrived in their pyjamas bringing a pillow and blanket with them, to enjoy story telling in the school library. This was followed by hot chocolate and cookies in their classroom.
2. **Book Sale** was held at the school. This was for all age groups and the children enjoyed buying books that were of a good price.
3. **Competitions.** Various competitions were held and the children had to come to the library to post their competitions in the different boxes.
4. **Our library tree displayed hearts.** This represented the library being the heart of the school.
5. **Library Literature Quiz was held for the grade 5 and 6 children.** The Grade 5 children did a written literature quiz working in groups of 3. The grade 6 children had a group literature quiz using the buzzers. The children loved it and we agreed to hold this activity again.
6. **Jelly Bean Journal** was used with a grade 4 class to do a KAGAN activity of pair and share. We have decided to send a few photos of this activity to The Jelly bean Journal for them to see how we are using this kiddies section of the newspaper.
7. **Highlight of the Week** was definitely the Peter Rabbit skit in our main assembly. I borrowed the Peter Rabbit costume from Penguin Publishers in Johannesburg. I dressed up as Peter Rabbit's mother and interrupted

the assembly looking for Peter Rabbit. Peter Rabbit (played by one of the Learnerships) arrived, and after a short skit, told the children to find him at break time to collect an entry form for a competition. The children then had to go to the heart of the school (the library) to post the form. Peter Rabbit arrived again, the following day to hand out the prizes to the winners in assembly. We sent a photo to the local newspaper. Penguin kindly sent us a few prizes.

- 8. Display of new books.** Although we display new books on a regular basis, a bumper one was displayed for Library Week.

Library Week was targeted mainly for Gr 1 – Gr 6 children this year. Our library is the HEART of the school. Children love to meet there and visit the library at break time too. Many books are taken out. I believe a library must be an inviting place for a child. Displays must be attractive and informative. Reading aloud to the children develops listening and verbal skills. I believe the librarian must cultivate curiosity. A librarian must talk about the books and help create a print rich environment by having books for all sorts and interests. I believe when the children are reading, the librarian or teacher must read too. Be passionate and help the children create a reading mind set for pleasure, enjoyment and relaxation.

Judges, please consider Sweet Valley for a prize.

I love what I do and when you love what you do, it does not feel like work.

Regards

# Appendix 14

Figure 1 and 2

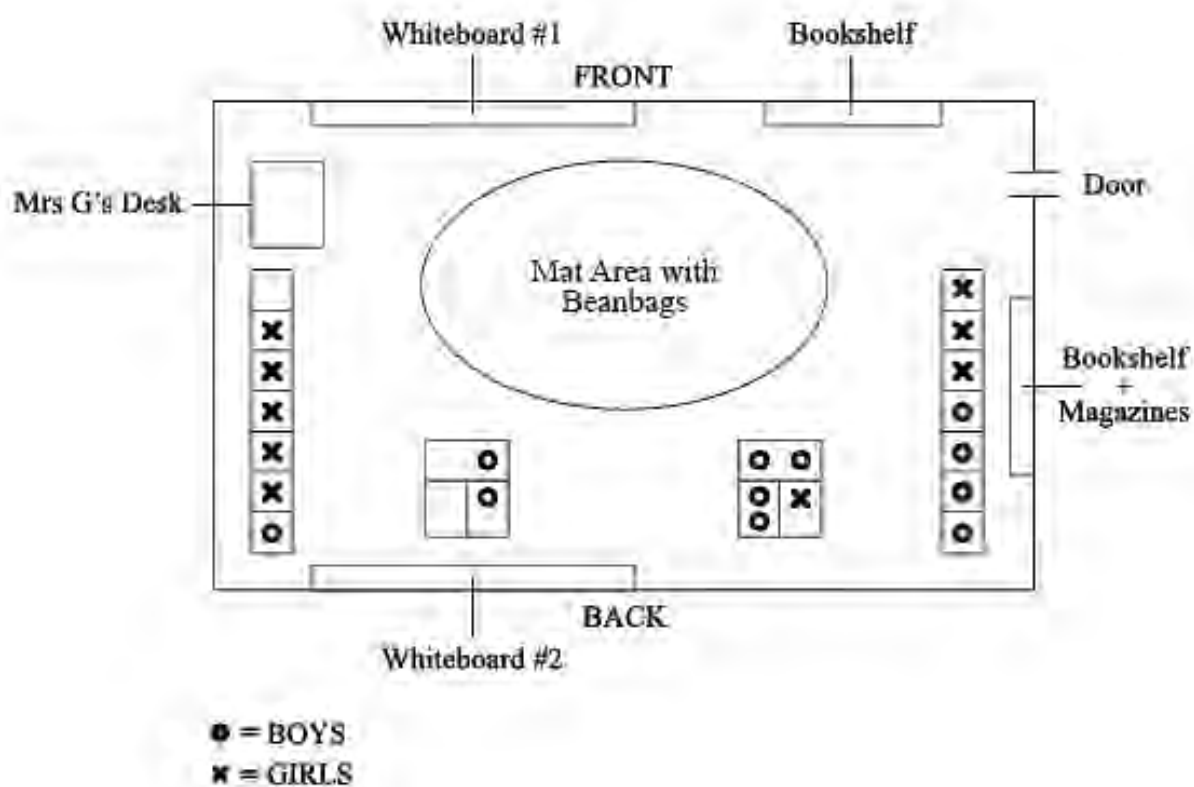
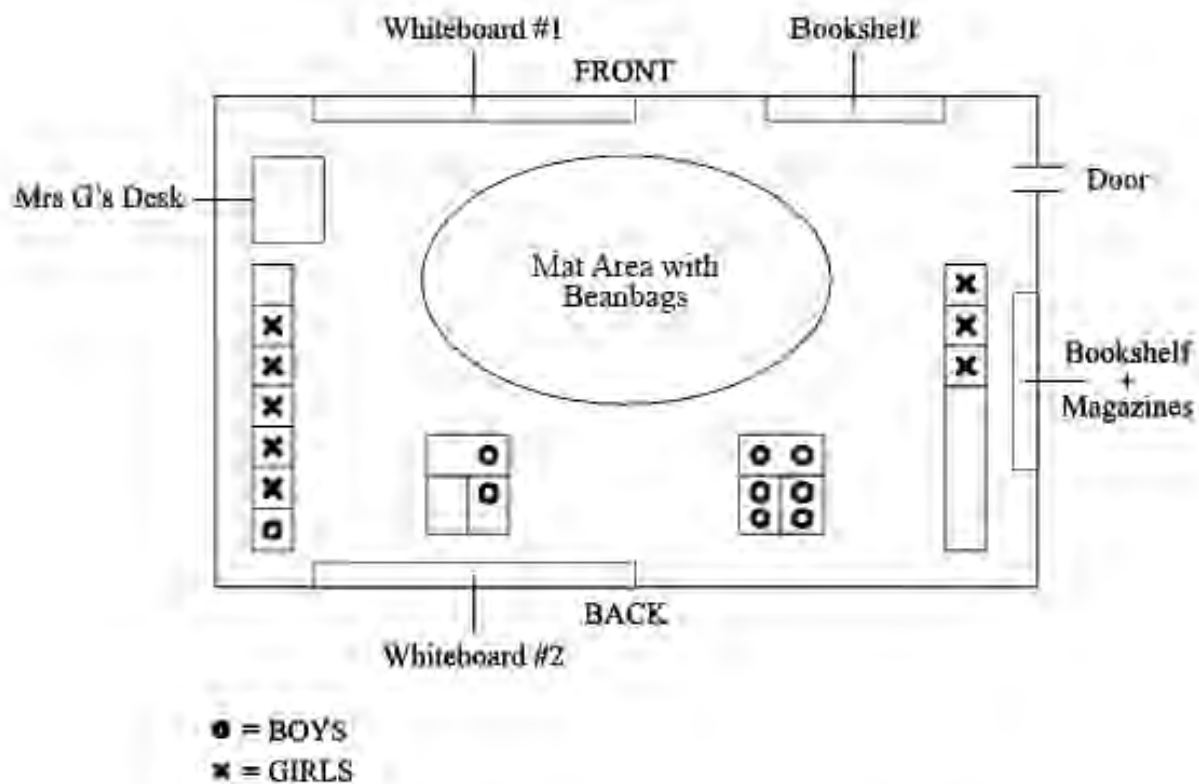
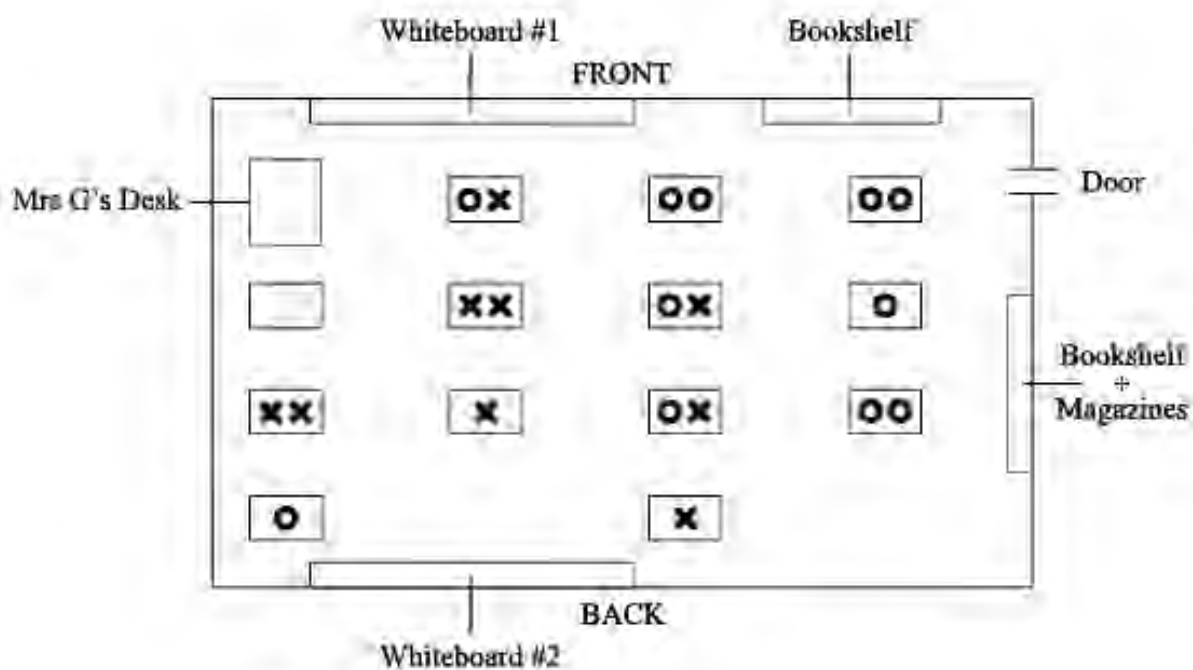
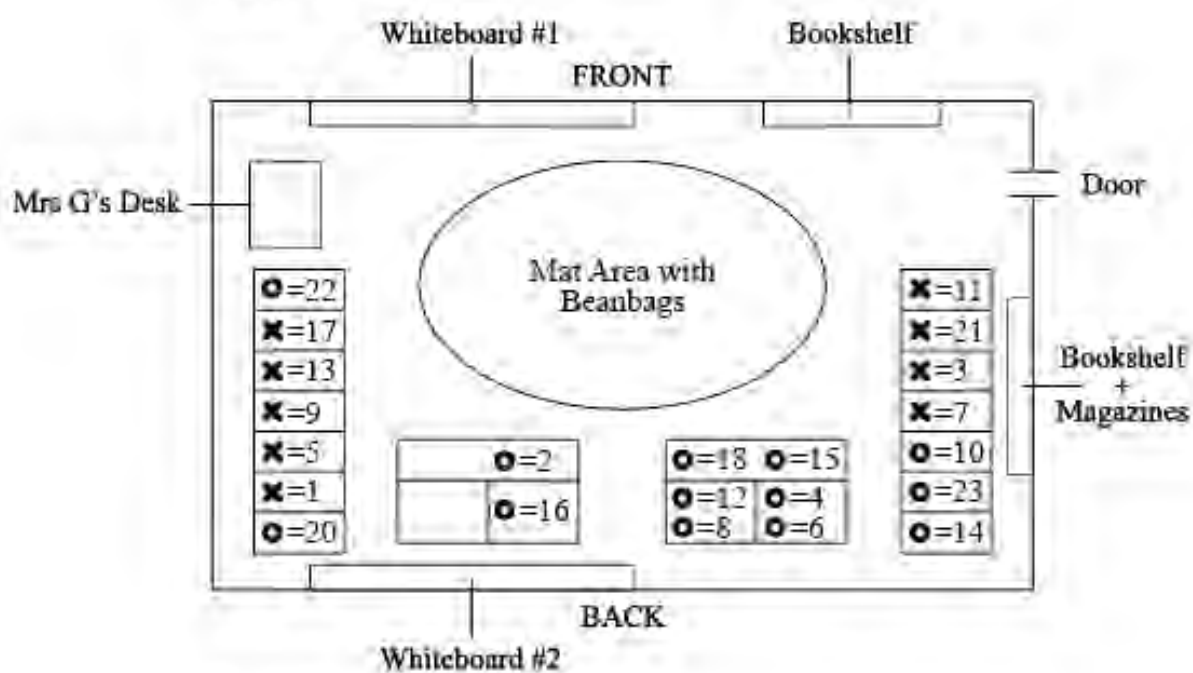


Figure 3 and 4



○ = BOYS  
 × = GIRLS



○ = BOYS  
 × = GIRLS

# (NUMBER) = THEIR ASSIGNED READING NUMBER