Teaching Methods to Support the Teaching of Reading in the Foundation Phase Class: A Case Study of Schools around Capricorn South District, Limpopo, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate how instructors experienced teaching reading in Foundation Phase classrooms and how they applied various tactics to make reading instruction successful. In a case study design, a qualitative research methodology was used. Six educators from three distinct schools made up the sample: two were Foundation Phase specialists, two had never participated in in-service training, and two are from former Model C schools. Semi-structured interviews and in-class observations were used to gather data. The semi-structured interviews' raw recorded data was first converted into written language, after which initial codes were assigned to each category of data. These results showed that teachers' methods in the classroom did not align with contemporary theories and best practices for teaching reading. Their proficiency in teaching reading utilising the CAPS-recommended reading approaches generally is adversely affected by this aspect. Learners' failure to meet satisfactory reading outcomes in Foundation Phase classrooms may be due to the difficulties in implementing various reading approaches.

KEYWORDS

Grade R; teaching methods; social constructivism; reading materials; learning techniques.

INTRODUCTION

The majority of educators lack contemporary, effective teaching strategies for reading instruction. Additionally, the researcher's school found that the students' classrooms lack a lot of print material. It was decided to send the Molteno Project visitors to the researcher's class because the other classrooms weren't very print-rich during their visit. According to Gordon and Browne (2014), instructors "help motivate children towards reading by creating an environment that provides rich opportunities to use the printed word." When teaching students to read, educators must give them the tools to eventually understand entire written texts that support daily tasks by helping them to associate meaning with individual words. Combining the problem description and the study's justification demonstrates the researcher's motive for starting the investigation. This resulted from Grade 2 students' inability to distinguish words and, consequently, read sentences. The fact that the majority of the teachers were unfamiliar with the most recent approaches to teaching reading that are appropriate for students at all skill levels in Foundation Phase classrooms served to exacerbate the situation.

According to Spaull (quoted in Naidoo et al., 2014), the issue still exists even after several interventions to enhance South African learners' reading abilities have been implemented. The researcher was inspired to investigate teachers' reading tactics in Foundation Phase classes by Spaull's explanation of the difficulties that students face while reading. "Learners have to be taught a variety of learning techniques to facilitate appropriate reading levels with comprehension: to extract information and to read for pleasure," according to Naidoo et al. (2014). The second-grade students in the researcher's class did not possess these skills. Therefore, it was concluded that, contrary to what Naidoo et al. (2014) said, the students in their grade one class were not taught various reading strategies based on their developmental stage. The Annual National Analysis (ANA) tool, selected by the South African National Education Ministry and overseen by Minister Angie Motshekga, aimed to evaluate the reading skills of students in the country. Unfortunately, the ANA revealed that students in grades 1–6 were not achieving the expected reading standards. This issue has been recognized as a widespread challenge in South Africa, as highlighted by research such as that of Jennings et al. (2010). Jennings et al. (2010) express worry that young individuals who lack reading skills may struggle to navigate the complexities of life.

In addition to South Africa, other countries are facing similar challenges with students' reading comprehension. For instance, the US Education Ministry emphasizes the need for teachers to possess strong pedagogical knowledge and content understanding to effectively teach reading in Foundation Phase classes. Similarly, the Netherlands and England rely on retired teachers as volunteers to address low reading proficiency.

Naidoo et al. (2014) state that in order to strengthen meaning-making and advance reading abilities, teachers should select texts or reading passages that are appropriate for the students' reading levels and experiences, in accordance with the Foundation for Learning (FFL) principles. The FFL has delineated the necessary strategies for educators and students to

advance reading competency. The first reading technique is guided reading, in which students who are at the same reading level are divided into groups of five and given reading instruction by the teacher. The second method involves the teacher reading aloud to the class or to a group of students, telling stories. The teacher reads aloud to the class from a "big book" as part of the last tactic, shared reading (Naidoo et al.,2014). According to Pretorius and Lephalala (2011), South Africa ranked last out of 40 participating countries in reading assessments. Additionally, PIRLS (2006) found that South African learners struggle to comprehend text while reading. Therefore, the researchers posed the following research question based on the study's purpose:

- What teaching strategies do teachers employ to assist with reading instruction in foundation phase classrooms in schools within the Capricorn South District of Limpopo, South Africa?

The paper starts by examining the instructional approaches employed by educators to facilitate reading instruction in the Foundation Phase at schools in the Capricorn South District, Limpopo, South Africa. Following that, the researcher examines the relevant literature pertaining to the instructional approaches utilized by teachers to support reading instruction in the Foundation Phase classroom. Lastly, the study presents the research methodological procedures followed in collecting data and analysing it to arrive at meaningful conclusions. The study aimed to contribute empirical evidence to the existing body of literature by providing practical recommendations for enhancing the teaching of reading within the Capricorn District and similar settings globally.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research employed the Social Constructivist Theory as a theoretical foundation to outline the collection of information related to teaching reading. Social constructivism is a major teaching technique that helps students by including contact and collaboration, claim Powel and Kalina (2009). Considered the founding father of social constructivism is Vygotsky (1978). The basis of social constructivism is rooted in Vygotsky's ideas about cognitive development. This theory encompasses three main components: the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding, and the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) (Donald et al., 2008). According to Van Staden (2018), Vygotsky's theory encourages an interactive learning process in which students actively engage with the More Knowledgeable Other [MKO] to generate knowledge. In order for students to read freely, teachers must effectively model reading when using various reading strategies, such as shared reading, guided reading, partnered reading, and reading aloud (Hill, cited in Moosa, 2018). Since the teachers in the study knew more than the students (MKO), they could provide the students hints when teaching reading. Scaffolding, as described by Donald et al. (2008), involves guiding individuals in understanding the appropriate structures and strategies within a specific area of knowledge, with teaching reading being the particular knowledge domain in this case. The initial focus of reading instruction should be on imparting students with the necessary knowledge and skills. This includes teaching reading methods, the

five elements of teaching reading, reading stages, and reading processes. According to Donald et al. (2008), the third component of the Social Constructivist Theory, known as ZPD, is characterized as...

> *"That critical space where a child cannot quite understand something on his or her own but has the potential to do so through proximal interaction with another person. A parent, peer, teacher, or another mentor who helps him or her think forward into that space (i.e., to make connections between the familiar and unfamiliar) acts as a mediator."*

According to Donald et al. (2008), it is crucial for teachers to have close interactions with learners to help them construct their own understanding of concepts. As learners become more proficient and internalize knowledge and skills, the level of assistance from the teacher should decrease. This approach, known as social constructivism, promotes interconnectedness among teachers, learners, and the learning process, ultimately enhancing reading instruction in Foundation Phase classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Guided reading

During guided reading, students respond to questions from the text and have productive conversations with their teacher and peers about the books they are reading. Teachers can engage students in reading activities by using guided reading (Horton, 2016). During guided reading, the instructor pushes students to adhere to the recommended reading procedures. The teacher lets students read the book's title, content pages, subheadings, blurbs, and illustrations while they read, allowing them to speculate about the plot (pre-reading). Students develop the ability to understand, interpret, and integrate the story. Comprehension also involves identifying the meanings of unfamiliar or difficult words. Importantly, teachers must equip students with the skills to relate the text's ideas to their own life experiences and viewpoints. Additionally, the teacher needs to help students retain new terms and their meanings in various contexts [after reading] (DBE, 2008). According to Pretorius and Lephalala (2011), the goal of guided reading is to help students improve their reading skills by matching them with other students who have similar ability levels.

Shared reading

Another way to teach reading is through shared reading, in which teachers assign students to read from a single, large book that they can all see. The group can all see the book's font because it is large enough. The instructor reads aloud to the students while using a pointer to indicate words (Joubert et al., 2013). Through group reading, the students must comprehend the main ideas of the text and make predictions about what will happen on the following page. The teacher should not only ask students questions and encourage them to relate the text to their own experiences, but also guide them in summarizing the story in sequence, while also providing explanations for the vocabulary, characters, and punctuation (DBE, 2008). Additionally, when students engage in collaborative reading, the instructor reads aloud and they

follow suit. The instructor is exhibiting the craft of reading in this way. The narrative is read aloud to the students multiple times until they fully understand it. The learners acquire the required vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation through repetition. To assist teachers in meeting the more rigorous evaluation requirements for a given grade, the shared reading technique was developed (DBE, 2008).

Independent reading

Independent reading is a structured and intentional activity in which educators prompt emerging readers to practice reading on their own, followed by conversations and exchanges (Joubert et al., 2013). Teachers should observe and listen to students during independent reading time to understand their behavior (DBE, 2008). Burns (2006) suggests that independent reading empowers learners to make individual choices while reading alone, without peer interaction. It is important for teachers to encourage students to select simple and engaging books to maintain their interest during independent reading sessions. Moreover, Joubert et al. (2013) advocate for daily unassisted reading during independent reading sessions. Students are encouraged to read independently after completing assigned tasks, even if other students are still occupied. This should be incorporated into the daily schedule at a set time. During independent reading, students silently read stories for fifteen minutes. It is essential for teachers to schedule daily reading time at the same time, determine the reading material for the day, and establish rules for behavior during independent reading (DBE, 2008).

Reading aloud

Reading aloud involves adults, teachers, or parents reading to learners. When adults read aloud, learners can hear how to sound out letters and words, which makes spelling easier (Davis, 2016). Reading aloud involves adults or teachers demonstrating how to pronounce and sound out words in the text. There is no set time for reading aloud; it can be done during the day, at the end of the day, or in the morning. If picture storybooks are used for reading aloud, the teacher should encourage learners to discuss the title, cover page, blurb, and authors. Learners should be given the opportunity to think, predict, and participate in discussions, internalizing the meaning of the text and connecting it to their daily lives (Joubert et al., 2013). Reading aloud is a whole-class activity aimed at fostering a love for reading and expanding vocabulary. When reading aloud, a variety of texts can be used, such as stories, poems, non-fiction books, newspapers, or magazines (DBE 2008). When selecting a text for reading aloud, the teacher should consider the learners' interests and developmental level.

Paired reading

Pairing reading, according to Gunning (quoted in Joubert et al., 2013), is when two students read the same book together. When the duo reads, the teacher should be there to act as a facilitator. Both students should find this book interesting. They are able to read various materials, including rhymes, riddles, and poems. Here, the instructor can work with two students at varying developmental stages. A reader who is proficient will assist a struggling reader. Peer support and increased reading enthusiasm are two benefits of paired reading for

students. Teachers must implement this reading strategy in order for students to gain reading abilities and use them successfully in pairs, groups, and solo reading during the Foundation Phase.

METHOD

Design

A case study research approach was chosen for the investigation. Case studies, as proposed by Cohen et al. (2010), provide a distinctive viewpoint on actual individuals in actual circumstances. By placing ideas in a concrete context as opposed to merely abstract theories or principles, they helps readers grasp them more fully. Case studies, according to Creswell (quoted in De Vos et al., 2014), examine problems within particular contexts while accounting for elements including time, place, and circumstance. Comparably, Yin (quoted in Yazan, 2015) characterises a case study as an empirical inquiry that looks at a real-life occurrence in the context of that phenomenon, especially in circumstances when the researcher has minimal control over the borders between the phenomenon and its setting. The case study shed light on how educators teach reading and how they conceptualise the process by answering the "how" and "why" questions about the phenomenon of interest. The research topic was clarified, and the experiences of teachers instructing reading in Foundation Phase classrooms were examined using this approach. Ultimately, the study offered a valuable understanding of the typical tasks teachers undertake when addressing the real-world difficulties of teaching reading in this context.

Research locale

Understanding the details about the study location is crucial. The researcher employed a purposive sampling method and chose three schools from the Capricorn South District.

Selection of the participants

In this study, a purposive sampling strategy was employed, which was predicated on the likelihood that the participant group would contribute to the creation of particular data. The fact that the participants were Foundation Phase reading instructors led to their selection. Purposive sampling involves selecting a specific group of individuals who possess relevant information about the research topic, as emphasized by McMillan and Schumacher (2014). The teachers selected for this study have extensive information and a thorough comprehension of the research issue, which is investigating the reading experiences of teachers in Foundation Phase classes. Six educators who possessed pertinent data pertaining to the research subject were made available for data collection in this study. Since six teachers from three separate schools made up a manageable group, the researcher was able to generate data more easily by limiting the sample size. The researcher was able to gather ample data from a variety of experiences, particularly from instructors' reading instruction in Foundation Phase classrooms, thanks to the sample size. The data from the selected individuals is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1.

Teachers' information

Participants (P)	Education and Training	Years of teaching experience	The language used for learning and teaching is known as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT).	Currently instructing a grade.
P 1	4-year in-service training qualification	18	Sepedi	one
P 2	4-year in-service training qualification	18	Sepedi	three
P 3	4-year in-service training qualification	10	Sepedi	one
P 4	3-year diploma training qualification	18	Sepedi	three
P 5	3-year diploma training qualification	10	Sepedi	one
P 6	3-year diploma training qualification	19	Sepedi	one

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews and observations were deemed the most appropriate instruments for data collection. The semi-structured interviews provided a flexible format that followed an interview guide (Cresswell, 2014). By allowing face-to-face interaction, the interviews fostered an interactive environment between the researcher and the participant. The teachers' responses to the interview questions yielded valuable insights into their experiences teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classrooms (Cresswell, 2012). The interviews commenced with an open-ended question, "Tell me about yourself." Each participant had 30 minutes to respond to the open-ended questions. An audio recorder was utilized for the study, and all participants signed consent forms prior to the interviews. The consent forms included their names, and school names, and assured the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses through the use of pseudonyms or codes. Additionally, the researcher observed teachers' lessons to gain insight into the context of teaching reading from various perspectives. According to De Vos et al. (2014), the observation process relies on direct contact with the participant. This method facilitated direct contact with the participants in different teaching settings. Consequently, a comprehensive understanding emerged regarding how the six teachers delivered their reading lessons, how learners responded, and the impact on both teachers and learners during reading instruction.

Data analysis

The research utilized the qualitative data analysis technique. Wahyuni (2012) suggests that qualitative data analysis involves breaking down and reassembling data to identify meaningful patterns and make informed conclusions based on evidence and reasoning. Data analysis is "primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among categories," according to McMillan and Schumacher (2014). After examining the recording and camera, reading the transcriptions, and listening to the audio recordings, the six participants' responses were critically analysed. In order to ascertain the participants' thinking based on the observation questions and the interview, the data was ultimately disassembled and reassembled (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). After transcribing the recorded data from the semi-structured interviews into written text, the researcher initially assigned preliminary codes to the different data categories, using the stages recommended by McMillan and Schumacher (2014) to gain an overall understanding. Because the semi-structured interviews lasted thirty minutes and the participants' responses were extremely detailed, each of the six study participants was given a code. They have P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6 as their codes. Coding made it easier to understand the various perspectives held by each participant. In order to grasp their opinions regarding teachers' experiences instructing reading in Foundation Phase classes, their comments were analysed and meaning was constructed. The validity and reliability of the study were enhanced by the various procedures and methods (observation and interviews) employed to collect the data. Follow-up visits were conducted to get clarification from the participants on the interview transcripts in order to further validate the procedure.

Ethical considerations

To ensure the ethical conduct of the research, several steps were taken. Firstly, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University of the Free State Ethics Committee as a master's student. This clearance (UFS-HSD2017/0786) allowed the researcher to seek permission to access research sites in three different schools. Secondly, the researcher, with the help of the school principals, met with Foundation Phase teachers to explain the study's purpose and topic and justify their involvement. Thirdly, the teachers were assured that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Lastly, the participants were briefed about the interview process and informed about the use of audio, video recorders, and cameras during observations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section expounds how teachers P1 and P5 delivered their instructions utilizing various approaches to reading.

The shared reading lesson

A South African folk tale, Sehlola wa Kubu (Sehlola the Hippo), was chosen by P1 for her lesson. According to CAPS (2011), learners in the Foundation Phase should be able to read both fiction and non-fiction texts. This interactive fictional tale featured repetitive actions and speech

patterns. It was a brief, straightforward story with charming illustrations depicting real-life scenarios, falling into the narrative genre. The teacher discussed the story's moral at the end, encouraging learners to be considerate of others. For this lesson, P1 had all the students sit on the floor while she stood in front of them (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Presentation of a lesson on shared reading at School A

P1 effectively utilized facial expressions to convey the changes in the animals' roles in the stories, adding excitement to the narrative. Learners actively engaged in the shared reading experience as demonstrated below:

P1: "*Lehono, re tlo bala puku ye (We are reading this book today) [showing the learners the cover page of the book].*"

Figure 2 illustrates the narrative that served as the foundation for the teacher's lesson.

Certainly! Here are the reworded sentences:

Following a short introduction, the teacher positioned the large book on the easel and took a seat on a chair. The teacher proceeded with the lesson by inquiring about the cover page of the large book from the students. Here are the inquiries the teacher made regarding the cover page.

P1: *"Ke mang a ka re balelang hlogo ya puku ye? (Who can read the title of this book?)".* Thabo: "*Sehlola wa Kubu (Sehlola the Hippo*)."
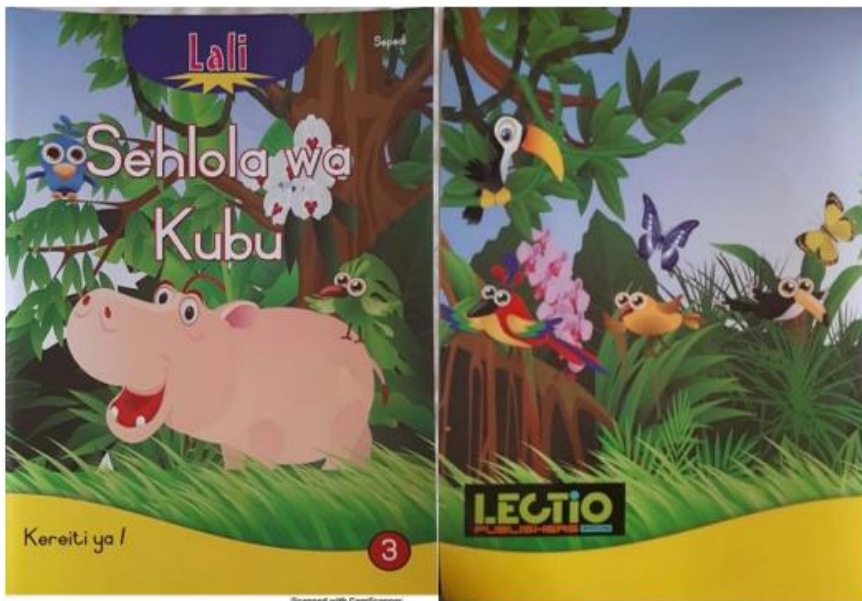
P1: "*Kgonene, Thabo. Kamoka, ga re baleng hlogo ya puku ye. (Well done, Thabo. Let us all read the title of the book)."* Lerato and Mpho: "*Sehlola wa Kubu (Sehlola the Hippo)."*

P1: "*Mongwadi wa puku yeke mang? (Who is the author of this book?)."*

Koketso and Mpho: "*Mongwadi ke Lali (The author is Lali)."*

Figure 2.

Sample pages from the "big book"

P1: "*Ke mang mogatiši wa puku ye? (Who is the publisher of the book?).*"

Thapelo: "*Keba ga Lectio publishers (Lectio-publishers).*"

P1: "*Le bona eng mo seswantšhong se? (What do you see in this picture?).*" Mpho: "*Ke bona kubu (I see a hippo).*" Tebogo: "*Ke bona nonyana e dutše mohlareng (I see a bird sitting on the tree).*" Lerato and Mosima: "*Re bona nonyana e dutše godimo ga kubu (We see the bird sitting on top of the hippo).*"

P1: "*Ka mo letlakaleng la ka morago le bona eng? (What do you see on the last cover page?).*" Tumelo: "*Ke bona dinonyana tša go fapana ka mebala" (I see birds with different colours).*" Lerato: "*Nna ke bona serurubele (I see a butterfly).*"

P1: "*Kgonene! Mebala ya dinonyana ke e me bjang? (Well done! (What are the colours of the birds?).*" Thapelo: "*Nonyana e na le mmala wa namune le mafego a matsoto (The bird is orange and brown in colour).*"

P1: "*Le nagana gore puku ye e tlo re botša ka eng? (What do you think the story is about?).*" A group of learners: "*E tlo re botša ka Kubu le dinonyana (The story is about the hippo and the birds).*"

Synthesis of the shared reading lesson

The font and images in the book were large, colourful, and easily seen by all the students. Prior to reading the oversized book, P1 reminded the students to respond to questions comprehensively and to clap their hands upon hearing or seeing a word with the /hl/ phoneme. The teacher utilized a ruler as a pointer. Initially, she read the book on her own, using different "voices" when needed, while the students listened. The students had to listen carefully to identify the /hl/ phoneme. The students identified the /hl/ phoneme in *Sehlola* (the name of the hippo), *hlodumela* (peep), and *sefahlego* (face). P1 then proceeded to ask questions about the story to which the students responded. The students had to examine the images and predict

the story's content. It was clear that P1 asked questions to support various reading skills such as prediction, evaluation, and critical thinking. She used leading questions to prompt the students' thinking and to gauge their understanding. After finishing the entire story, she invited the students to read along with her.

P1: *"Sehlola ke kubu ya go dula ele jwang? (What is Sehlola's character?)."* Mpho: *"Sehlola ke kubu ya go dula e thabile (Sehlola is a joyful animal)."*

P1: *"Ke eng se Sehlola a beng a se rata? (What is it that Sehlola likes?)."*

Thato and Manana [simultaneously]: *"Sehlola o be a rata go rutha ka meetseng ge go fiŠa (Sehlola likes to swim when it is hot)."*

P1: *"Lena ge go fiŠa le rata go dira eng? (What do you like to do when it is hot?)."* Mosima: *"Nna ke rata go opela (I like to sing)"* [Other learners responded with various things they like doing].

P1: *"Ke ka baka la eng Sehlola a sega? (Why was Sehlola laughing?)."*

Mosina and Mpho: *"Ka gore o tŠhoŠitŠe dinonyana di sa iketlile (because he frightened the birds while relaxing)."*

P1: *"Naa dinonyana di ile tŠa re eng ge Sehlola a etla go tŠona? (What did the birds say to Sehlola when he came over to them?)."* Learners: *Di ile tŠa re "Sehlola wa tla wa re tŠhoŠa! (They said you frightened us, Sehlola).*

P1: *"O be o tla ikwa jwang, ge e be e le wena dinonyana tŠe? (How would you feel if you were these birds?)."* Kabelo: *"Nna be ke tlo fofa (I would fly away)."*

The teacher used open-ended questions to encourage critical thinking, knowledge retention, and reasoning skills among the learners (Walsh & Hodge, 2018). Throughout the lesson, the teacher periodically paused to gauge the learners' reasoning abilities and ensure their comprehension of the story's vocabulary. Initially, the teacher's questions sparked interest in the story and facilitated discussions. As the lesson progressed, the teacher posed more advanced questions, prompting learners to express their opinions and relate the story to their own experiences. For instance, she asked them how they would feel in the birds' situation. During the interactive phase, P1 clarified the meanings of challenging words in the story. She had prepared flashcards with these words before the lesson, allowing the learners to read and then display them on the chalkboard. Figure 3 illustrates examples of such flashcards, featuring new words such as "*hlodumela*" (peep), "*rutha*" (swim), "*thokong*" (that side), and "serapeng" (zoological garden).

P1 asked the students to form sentences using the new vocabulary. For instance, "*MoŠemane o hlodumela mosetsana a robetše"* The boy peeks at the sleeping girl, and "*bana ba a rutha*" Children are swimming. Afterward, the teacher commended the students for their efforts and instructed them to return to their desks.

Figure 3.
Flashcards containing challenging vocabulary words.
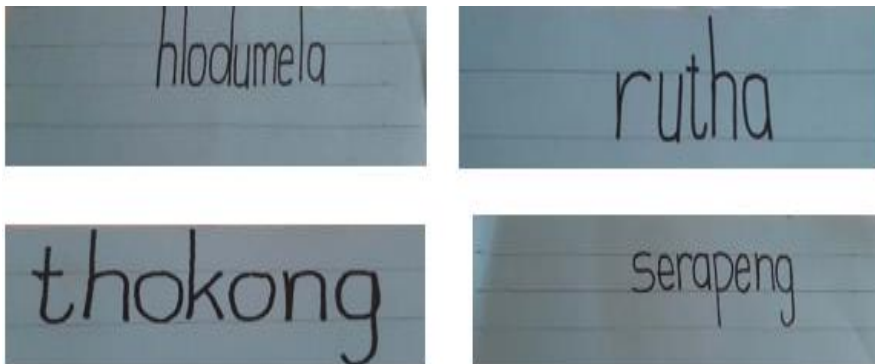
Discussion of Lesson 1

The teacher's interactive approach during shared reading prompted the learners to respond accurately by asking them relevant questions, stimulating their thinking and promoting their understanding of the text. This approach reflected key aspects of social constructivism, such as interaction, collaboration, and cognitive development. According to Tudge and Winterhoff (cited in Sills & Rowse, 2016), collaboration fosters verbal reasoning and discussion with knowledgeable individuals, aiming to achieve a shared understanding and enhance children's cognition. Classroom observation indicated that P1 effectively applied shared reading principles by incorporating techniques like prediction, reading aloud, and re-reading. Additionally, P1 engaged the learners in a discussion focusing on the cover page of the book, discussing the pictures, author, and blurb of the story (CAPS, 2011).

P1's method of teaching vocabulary using flashcards involved explaining difficult words herself rather than guiding learners to use contextual clues. This approach contradicts the learner-centred approach of social constructivist theory. Instead, P1 could have employed the "five finger" strategy, which involves using pictures, word recognition, sounding out the word, and consulting the teacher to help learners grasp the meaning of unfamiliar words.

In a positive development, P1's presentation allowed students to connect their existing knowledge with new information. During this lesson, students successfully recognized words with the /hl/ sound that they had previously learned. Leveraging their prior knowledge helped students bridge the gap between what they already knew and what they were learning. As noted by Right (2018), repetitive reinforcement is an effective way to help students independently explore and understand new information.

Developing reading skills

The components of reading encompass phonemic awareness, word recognition, phonics, sight words, comprehension skills, and vocabulary development. These aspects were evident during the lesson led by P1, where various reading activities were used to enhance reading skills. P1 helped learners recognize words by engaging them in activities such as clapping when they heard or saw words with the phoneme /hl/. This approach encouraged learners to focus on

identifying such words, thereby enhancing their word recognition and phonemic awareness. Additionally, connecting the sounds with the phoneme /hl/ contributed to vocabulary development and better understanding of the text. Research by Sidhu and Pexman (2017) supports the idea that sound symbolism is essential in understanding spoken language. By identifying the phoneme /hl/ in the words on flashcards, learners connected new information with what they already knew, aligning with the effective strategy of connecting the known with the unknown, as suggested by Hardman (2014). Vygotsky's social constructivist theory also emphasizes the role of teachers as More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs) in guiding learners to make meaning of new knowledge. This approach allowed learners to revisit what they already knew and form new connections with the content.

Using reading materials to support reading development

The classroom evaluations showed that P1 utilized a range of reading resources to effectively involve students in imaginative ways. During shared reading activities, P1 utilised a visually appealing big book with bold font and colourful illustrations, which was positioned in the aisle for all to see. Although lacking a traditional pointer, P1 adeptly used a ruler to guide learners through the text. These thoughtful choices of materials, including flash cards and pictures, demonstrated P1's understanding of the shared reading approach as described in the DBE (2008) guidelines.

Modelling reading

During shared reading, P1 used a technique called "modelled reading". The teacher read the text aloud while the students listened. By discussing the cover page of the book and allowing the children to make predictions, P1 assessed what the children already knew. Additionally, the teacher showed the students how spoken words and letters work together to add meaning to their reading of texts, demonstrating how to read expressively from left to right in preparation for independent reading. Through modelled reading, P1 gave the students opportunities to imitate their teacher, a strategy that the participants found helpful in mastering reading, sounding, and pronouncing words correctly during interviews. Hill (cited in Moosa, 2018) advocates for this teacher demonstration as an effective and meaningful strategy for teaching reading. This was followed by a group-guided lesson presentation.

Group-guided reading lesson

P5 started her lesson by incorporating a song.

Ditlha tŠa ngwaga di a dikologa, dikologa, Ditlha tŠa ngwaga di a dikologa, ngwaga ka moka. (The seasons of the year go round and round, round and round, round and round; the seasons of the year go round and round, all year round).

The students joyfully sang a song with their teacher, to the melody of "The Wheels on the Bus." Following the song, the teacher inquired about the current weather conditions.
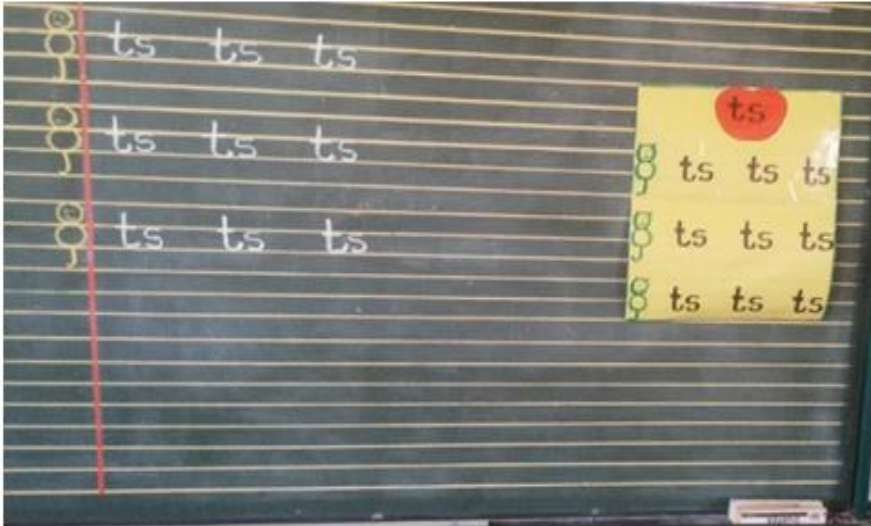
P5: *"Lehono go sele bjang? (How is the weather today?)."*

Learner: *"Lehono go a fiŠa (Today, it is hot)."*

She provided the students with guidance on their assignments and conduct. Next, she asked them to take note of the phoneme /ts/, which was displayed on the chalkboard (refer to Figure 4).

Figure 4.

The phoneme /ts/ on the chalkboard

Furthermore, P5 requested that the students create their own words using the /ts/ phoneme as an independent task. The students were instructed to work quietly, while the others remained seated and focused on their activities, using their exercise books (refer to Figure 5).

Figure 5.

Learners working independently

During the next part of the lesson, she asked nine enthusiastic students to come to the carpet area in front of the classroom, close to the chalkboard. P5 then conducted guided reading sessions with the group, catering to two different sets of learners. For the first group, she used a homemade A3 board crafted from cardboard, featuring sentences with the /ts/ sound, illustrated in Figure 5. She displayed the board for them to review.

The first learner was provided with a ruler to assist with reading from the board. The learners took turns using the ruler to read while allowing all members of the group to follow along. Together, they read the sentences inscribed on the A3 board out loud. Following the reading session, P5 asked the students to write sentences using the sound /ts/ in their own notebooks for their independent work (refer to Figure 6). At the same time, the first group continued with their individual tasks.

Figure 6.

Conducting a collaborative reading session for a group at School B.

Figure 7.

Text for guided reading on an A4 sheet

Afterwards, P5 directed the second group of 12 students to put away their books and move to the carpeted area. There, she provided them with an A4 board containing the phoneme /ts/ to practice reading. The words on the board included tsena (enter), tseba (know), tsebe (ear), and katse (cat) [refer to Figure 7]. Each student took turns reading the four words on the board before passing it to the next student, ensuring that everyone had a chance to read them.

Following this activity, P5 instructed the second group to return to their seats and resume their individual tasks.

Synthesis of the guided reading lesson

It was noted that during the guided reading lesson, P5 utilized small groups of learners, but the session did not align with the recommended teaching guidelines for reading at the Foundation Phase level. The principles of guided reading emphasize the importance of fostering independent engagement with the text through discussions and reading. However, the observed lesson lacked interactivity and was predominantly teacher-centred, deviating from the social constructivist theory. Additionally, P5 used a method that concentrated on visible actions, instead of adopting Vygotsky's social constructivist approach.

Group-guided reading requires dividing students into groups based on their reading levels. This strategy allows teachers to support students in developing the necessary skills needed to apply their expanding awareness of print norms, letter-sound linkages, and other basic abilities within the context of reading (DBE, 2008). Unfortunately, P5 did not follow this principle and failed to ask her students any questions related to the text. Instead, she simply had them read aloud word by word, which only encouraged memorisation and passive listening. As a result, P5 missed crucial opportunities to help her students develop their comprehension skills and engage with the text.

Discussion of Lesson 2

After analyzing P5's lesson, it was evident that she had misunderstood the Group-Guided Reading methodology for a session on phonics reinforcement (DBE 2008). She appeared to emphasize phoneme instruction by handing out A3 and A4 boards that introduced the phoneme /ts/ to students. Unfortunately, during her presentation, P5 did not engage the small groups in meaningful conversations regarding the book they were reading, such as the title, content pages, sub-headings, blurb, photos, and potential story predictions. This method did not promote the growth of learners' vocabulary, word recognition, or higher-order thinking abilities. According to the Department of Education and CAPS (2011), in guided reading, the instructor shall provide each student in the group with access to a book or reader, based on resource availability.

Moreover, P5 neglected to engage learners in expanding their vocabulary through active participation. The "five finger strategy", a technique utilised by learners when faced with unfamiliar words, was not utilised in P5's instruction. Consequently, learners struggled to connect new information with their personal experiences, indicating a missed opportunity for P5 to foster the development of their comprehension abilities.

Developing reading skills

Dryden and De Vos (quoted in Mohangi, 2018) argue that teachers can use learning activities in the classroom to effectively foster diverse learning styles and pique learners' enthusiasm in increasing their reading abilities. As a result, P5 attempted to incorporate A3 and A4 boards in

her presentation, allowing the students to work independently while she was busy with other groups. She enabled the students to work alone so that they could make their own decisions. To some extent, P5 permitted students to practice reading aloud the words displayed on the board. Through this technique, she increased their awareness of word recognition. However, in light of the Group-Guided Reading principles, she did not apply this practice (DBE, 2008), particularly because the usage of A3 and A4 boards failed to pique learners' reading interest.

Using reading materials to support reading development

Due to a lack of tiny reading resources, P5 relied on A3 and A4 boards for their group-guided reading lessons. While the attempt was well-intended, this method did not allow the pupils to successfully connect their expanding knowledge of print with other essential skills. As a result, opportunities to improve word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension were squandered (DBE, 2008). Using A3 and A4 boards during group-guided reading may encourage memorisation, which can be both advantageous and disadvantageous for students. While this approach contradicts the social constructivist theory of learning, it does keep the brain active and healthy by allowing students to recall words read to them by P5. However, memorisation can result in surface learning because pupils do not completely connect with the text (Abrihan, 2017).

Modelling reading

During the presentation, the teacher used a ruler as a pointer on the A3 board to show the students that reading begins from left to right. Rather than verbalising her modelling, she relied on actions and simply instructed the students to read. It is vital to highlight that, according to Duke and Pearson (quoted in Young, 2017), a teacher's modeling of comprehension skills, such as inference and prediction, is critical in assisting pupils to understand the material. However, none of these tactics were demonstrated in this class. The students merely read the text on the A3 and A4 boards, without connecting with the content. According to Hagaman, Casey, and Reid (quoted in Zarei & Roustai, 2019), modeling helps improve a learner's paraphrasing skills and educating them to be active readers by breaking down texts into smaller components.

Unfortunately, the teacher did not demonstrate these skills to her students. Instead, she encouraged them to simply repeat the words without any contextualisation or analysis.

Canine et al. (quoted in Young, 2017:1) found that modelling is an important component of group-guided reading. It serves as the primary means for teachers to ensure that learners can apply the concepts and strategies they have been taught. Unfortunately, this did not happen in P5's lesson. The concept of modeling, as articulated by Jitendra and Silbert (2017), is consistent with the concepts of social constructivism, which emphasize the necessity of collaborative and interactive learning. This should have occurred in the classroom between P5 (as the MKO) and the students, utilizing real-life practical knowledge (Ardiansyah and Ujiharti, 2018).

Limitations

Due to unanticipated circumstances, the researcher had to reschedule interviews and classroom observations. One of the participants scheduled for observation was absent. However, the

researcher was able to secure a substitute subject who was willing to step in, so the process was not jeopardized. The second restriction of the study was the difficulty of maintaining frequent communication with assigned supervisors at UFS because the researcher lives in Limpopo Province, which is far from Bloemfontein.

Contribution of the Study

The primary goal of this study was to investigate instructors' teaching experiences in Foundation Phase classes with reference to reading instruction. The findings of this study provided a new perspective on teaching reading at this phase. These findings will help various stakeholders, including the Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE), senior district managers, curriculum advisors, circuit managers, principals, teachers, and new researchers, refine and develop their educational practices while also addressing the challenges that arise in Foundation Phase classrooms.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The purpose of the research was to investigate the impact of teaching techniques employed by teachers when instructing reading during the Foundation Phase. The findings of the study disclosed that most instructors, considered more knowledgeable ones, faced difficulties in utilising various methodologies, leading to ineffective teaching of reading that failed to equip learners with the ability to comprehend text. The results showed that various reading teaching approaches in the Foundation Phase require teachers to have extensive relevant content knowledge. Furthermore, the study discovered that reading resources are critical in teaching reading, especially in Foundation Phase classes. The absence of such materials can significantly impede the teaching and learning process. It is therefore recommended that reading materials be made essential for schools to ensure that they have a sufficient and diverse range of reading materials that cater to the needs of different reading methodologies. If this guideline is not followed, the lack of reading materials might harm teaching reading.

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