Teachers' Self-Reported Instructional Practices for Reading Comprehension Instruction to Non-Readers.

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Abstract

This study focuses on the instructional strategies employed by experienced teachers to teach reading comprehension to non-readers in the Namibian upper primary phase within mainstream classrooms. Existing literature suggests that the support provided by experienced teachers is critical for non-readers. However, little is known about the specific strategies used by primary school ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers in Namibia for this purpose. To address this gap, the study utilized a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design. Data was gathered through class observations and two stimulated recall interviews conducted before and after the observations. Five Grade 5 teachers in the Oshana region of Namibia were purposefully selected as participants. The findings reveal that the teachers employed various strategies to enhance reading comprehension among non-readers. Pre-reading activities involved activating non-readers' linguistic schema using manipulatives, dictionaries, and glossaries to define new words. Linguistic resources such as flashcards, wall posters, real objects, and pictures were used to expand non-readers' vocabulary knowledge. Instructional reinforcement strategies, like motivation, activation of prior knowledge through oral discussions, games related to the text, and discussions of reading comprehension rules, were also utilized to support non-readers' comprehension. The findings hold value for Grade 5 ESL teachers, providing them with effective teaching strategies and opportunities for self-reflection when teaching reading comprehension to non-readers. Additionally, ESL subject advisors can benefit from understanding the needs of primary school non-readers in the Ompundja circuit, Oshana region, to offer appropriate support to upper primary phase ESL teachers in mainstream classes.

Keywords: Experienced English language teachers, instructional practices, multilingual teaching, non-readers, reading comprehension

INTRODUCTION

The ability of a child to read has a profound impact on their academic progress and social engagement both within and beyond the school environment (Kirchner & Mostert, 2017; Oakhill

et al., 2019). However, illiteracy remains a persistent global concern, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where approximately 750 million youth lack basic literacy skills, as reported by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2017). This alarming situation has the potential to hinder the achievement of the goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2017). The issue of non-readers and poor comprehenders in primary schools is a matter of concern worldwide. For instance, research conducted by Snyder et al. (2016) in the United States indicated that 33% of fourth-grade learners and 24% of eighth-grade learners perform well below the proficient reading benchmark. Similarly, Artuso et al. (2019) highlighted the challenges faced by many primary school learners in Italy, where students read below their grade level and struggle to connect with the sensorimotor experiences while reading. This issue is not exclusive to a particular region, as evident in South Africa, where a significant portion of learners (85%) are considered non-readers with limited access to printed materials (Le Roux, 2017). Furthermore, in South Africa, the concern regarding reading proficiency extends from primary school to university level, particularly in English Second Language (ESL) courses (Caga & Soya, 2019).

Namibia, like many other African countries, grapples with the issue of non-readers learning alongside successful readers in mainstream primary school classes (February, 2019). Non-readers are learners who face reading barriers and have weak fluency skills, making it difficult for them to accurately read printed words according to their age and cognitive abilities (Nel, 2018). Various factors contribute to these challenges, such as dyslexia, limited vocabulary, and pragmatic difficulties with the text. Despite the efforts to promote inclusive education in Namibia, obstacles remain, particularly concerning literacy and numeracy standards (Ministry of Education, Arts & Culture (MoEAC), 2017). One of the major challenges is the scarcity of qualified teachers, especially in the ESL context, resulting in ineffective learning and teaching experiences (Hautemo & Julius, 2016).

Namibia's education system labelled "Education for All," aims to provide compulsory primary education, bridging historical disparities in the education landscape (MoEAC, 2016). As part of the efforts to counter illiteracy, the Ministry of Education has implemented a compulsory weekly reading lesson in the ESL primary timetable to promote reading for pleasure (MoEAC, 2016). Despite these initiatives, Namibia continues to face literacy challenges among both primary and secondary school learners (Ithindi, 2019). The country's participation in international and national formative studies highlights that Namibian learners still struggle to meet the set reading benchmarks (February, 2019). The Namibian and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) reports for Grade 6 consistently show low performances in reading proficiency and comprehension (MoEAC, 2017).

Namibia is a multilingual country, where Grade 3 learners transition from mother tongue instruction in lower primary phase to the use of English in the senior primary phase (Kirchner & Mostert, 2017). Mother tongue instruction refers to the practice of using a child's first language as the medium of instruction in early education (Norro, 2021). Implementing mother tongue instruction in lower primary schools in Namibia yields multiple linguistic and academic advantages. By preserving cultural identity, facilitating language acquisition, supporting cognitive development, boosting academic achievement, and fostering parental involvement, mother tongue instruction empowers children for success in their educational journey (Niipare, 2019).The use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction forms a solid foundation for language learning and academic progress, contributing to a well-rounded and culturally enriched educational experience for Namibian children (Norro, 2021; Niipare, 2019).

However, Alkhateeb and Alshaboul (2022) found that primary school teachers poorly implement these multilingual strategies for enhancing English language learners (ELLs) reading comprehension due to inadequate initial teacher education of MT in second language acquisition. By the time Grade 4 learners transition into an English language learning medium, their reading comprehension skills in both MT and ESL are expected to be well-developed. However, the '2023 Background Report for the 2030 Reading Panel,' which specifically refers to South African learners, discovered that Grade 4 learners struggle with reading for meaning (Spaull, 2023). Additionally, in most Namibian schools are poorly resourced, it may be argued that teachers must improvise reading materials that accommodate all learners by writing short texts on posters or collecting stories from newspaper and magazine articles for reading comprehension purposes (Ithindi, 2019; MoEAC, 2016). Given the limited resources in many Namibian schools, teachers often need to improvise reading materials and self-developed instructional practices to accommodate all learners (Ithindi, 2019).

Although several studies have been conducted on ESL in the Namibian context with regard to enhancing learners' reading (February, 2019; Hautemo & Julius, 2016; Ithindi, 2019; Kirchner & Mostert, 2017; Liswaniso, 2021), there is still limited research to date pertaining to the teachers' role and experience in supporting primary school non-readers in reading comprehension. According to February (2019), teaching experience is regarded as a crucial factor which contributes to teacher quality in promoting reading in primary school learners. For this reason, this study focused on exploring the instructional practices that experienced teachers have developed over the years to support and handle non-readers. Experienced teachers in the context of this study refers to ESL Grade 5 teachers who have taught the same grade for more than five years (MoEAC, 2016). Instructional practices in reading comprehension refer to the specific methods, and techniques used by Grade 5 educators to teach and support non-readers in their ESL lessons.

Focus of the study

Based on the escalating numbers of primary school non-readers in Namibia and with the knowledge that teachers are influential in improving this situation (Liswaniso, 2021; Okkinga et al., 2018), this study sought to explore the strategies that experienced teachers have developed over the years to support and handle non-readers in the mainstream class. Specifically, the study focused on exploring the strategies used by experienced upper primary phase ESL primary school teachers in improving reading for comprehension among Grade 5 non-readers in the small town of Ongwediva in the Oshana region of Namibia. Specifically, the study sought to provide answer to the following question: What strategies do ESL teachers use for teaching reading comprehension to Grade 5 non-readers in mainstream classrooms?

Theoretical Orientations

The is grounded in two essential theories, Schema Theory and Reflective Practice, which serve as the core framework for this study (Anderson, 2018; Neumann & Kopcha, 2018). The Schema theory is centred on the reader and encompasses three distinct types of schema: linguistic schemas, formal schemas, and content schemas (Paul & Christopher, 2017). Linguistic schemas are fundamental components for reading comprehension, as they lay the groundwork for content and formal schemas. They involve the mastery of language structures such as grammar, idioms, and sentence structure. Formal schemas, on the other hand, influence the magnitude of text genres and the rhetoric and knowledge that readers acquire while reading. Lastly, content schemas pertain to the background knowledge and experiences possessed by the reader, which can directly impact

the extent of their reading comprehension. The primary focus of my study is to explore the potential impact of activating any of these three schemas in enhancing reading comprehension among non-readers. To gather relevant data, pre-reading activities were emphasized, and the participants' activation of linguistic schemas and prior knowledge before engaging with the targeted text was observed. To gauge non-readers' formal schema, observation and interviews were conducted, with special attention given to the sources and types of texts provided to the non-readers. Through these observations, the importance of schema theory in promoting reading comprehension among non-readers was thoroughly analysed. Additionally, the study observed how Grade 5 ESL teachers designed instructional activities, utilized linguistic resources, and incorporated reflective practice using appropriate teaching strategies during a Grade 5 reading comprehension lesson.

The second theoretical framework, reflective practice, comprises three types of reflection: reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-for-action (Cirocki & Widodo, 2019; Farrell, 2017). Reflection-in-action centred on how teachers react to problems that arise during teaching, encouraging immediate adjustments. On the other hand, reflection-on-action involves a summative assessment of lesson flaws and challenges faced by learners during the teaching-learning process, prompting teachers' attention to make improvements in future lessons (Farrell, 2013). Reflection-for-action refers to teachers' future actions planned to transform current practices by incorporating their own experiences, beliefs, and perceptions. In the study, we focused on how teachers reflected on their own practices before, during, and after teaching reading comprehension to non-readers in mainstream classrooms. To gather data, Grade 5 ESL teachers were observed and interviewed to understand how, when, and why they employed reflective practice while teaching reading comprehension to non-readers. Furthermore, their use of reflection-in-action to cater to non-readers was examined, including the scrutiny of participants' lesson objectives, teaching strategies, teaching aids, lesson presentations, and instructional activities. Additionally, their employment of reflection-on-action in evaluating their teaching decisions and justifying their beliefs was observed, along with the integration of appropriate teaching strategies. Finally, reflection-for-action was measured by analysing their evaluation comments in lesson plans, specifically looking for any specified lesson flaws and proposed methods of improvement for the future.

METHOD
Exploratory case study design

A qualitative approach was deemed valuable in my study context, since it provided a theoretical framing within which to explore the way Grade 5 ESL teachers manage non-readers in a mainstream class. This exploration took place through lesson observations, document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Hence, using experienced ESL Grade 5 teachers as participants in the study helped me to gather authentic data on the effective teaching strategies, they used for supporting non-readers in the mainstream classroom. We used a case study design. Yin (2018) explains that there are three types of case study, namely, explanatory, descriptive and exploratory. He further indicates that some types of "what" question are justifiable and the rationale for the utilisation of an exploratory case study. Accordingly, an exploratory case study denotes an in-depth study, conducted within a bounded system, which investigates a contemporary phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). In line with this, my study was conducted within a bounded context, targeting Grade 5 non-readers (the case) and restricted to experienced primary school ESL teachers in the upper primary phase. The boundedness of my study enabled me to gain an in-depth

understanding of successful strategies for teaching Grade 5 non-readers reading comprehension, by directly observing their implementation by experienced teachers in their mainstream class. An exploratory case study permitted me to conduct my study on an under-researched topic pertaining the teachers' role and experience in supporting non-readers in reading comprehension in the Namibian primary school context.

Selection of participants

We employed purposive sampling to select our participants. Purposive sampling is a method commonly used in qualitative research, as described by Creswell and Poth (2018). It involves deliberately selecting participants based on specific criteria, as outlined by Nieuwenhuis (2019). The reason for using purposive sampling was to ensure that we gathered relevant and comprehensive data regarding the research problem, which revolves around primary school non-readers. We believed that experienced teachers would offer valuable insights and information on effective strategies for teaching reading to non-readers. Thus, five participants were purposely chosen from five different public schools in the Ompundja circuit, Oshana region, considering their diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. This approach allowed us to explore various contextual perspectives on the topic. To ensure the richness of the data collected, we also considered the participants' teaching experience and academic qualifications. This ensured that all selected participants had undergone professional training in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) at the upper primary phase level. To be part of the sample, the participants needed to meet the following criteria: i) be qualified ESL teachers; ii) have a minimum of four years of teaching experience in Grade 5 ESL; and iii) currently teach at a state-owned school in the Omupundja circuit, Oshana region. To ensure a comprehensive data collection, we verified that all participants were professionally experienced upper primary phase trained ESL teachers.

Data collection and analysis methods

The collecting and analysing of data in this involved a multi-step process that combined qualitative research techniques, including stimulated recall interviews and classroom observations. The study began by selecting Grade 5 English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in Namibia as participants. These teachers were chosen based on their experience in teaching non-readers and their willingness to participate in the study. Prior to data collection, all participating teachers were informed about the study's purpose, the nature of the interviews and observations, and the confidentiality of their responses.

The first phase of data collection involved classroom observations. During classroom observations, the teachers' lessons were recorded e in video, or written format (using the researcher's diary). Each Grade 5 ESL teacher was observed for two 45-minute comprehension lessons. During the observations, TM took note of the linguistic scaffolding, activation of different schemas, and the implementation of reflective practices used by the teachers in handling non-readers during comprehension lessons. Since the non-readers were in the mainstream classroom, TM also paid attention to how each participant implicitly and explicitly focused on the non-readers in each stage of the lesson. These recordings were used as the basis for the second interview, helping teachers reflect on their teaching actions. After the classroom observations, a second interview was conducted. This interview was based on the recorded lessons. During this interview, TM guided the participants to reflect on their teaching actions and pedagogical decisions by providing context from the recorded lessons. This process allowed the teachers to recall and analyse their actions in real-time and provide valuable insights into their instructional practices.

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The second phase of data collection involved conducting stimulated recall interviews. These interviews occurred after the classroom observations. These interviews were scheduled for one hour with each teacher. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insights into the teachers' instructional strategies for teaching reading comprehension to non-readers drawn from an analysis of their lesson plans. A co-researcher, referred to as "TM" conducted the interviews. TM was trained in qualitative research techniques and had a deep understanding of the research objectives. During the first interview, TM prompted the teachers to recall and describe their thoughts, feelings, and actions while teaching reading comprehension to non-readers. Specific questions were asked about the strategies they employed and how they integrated schema theory and reflective practice in their lessons. To facilitate recall and reflection, TM used the participants' video of the observed lesson and lesson planning of the teachers' lesson plans. These prompts helped participants accurately reconstruct their thoughts and reactions during their instructional practices.

The audio and video recordings of the interviews and classroom observations were transcribed verbatim. Written prompts, such as lesson plans and teaching materials, were also transcribed for analysis. The transcribed data were coded for analysis. This involved identifying recurring themes, patterns, and categories related to instructional strategies, schema theory, and reflective practice in reading comprehension instruction for non-readers. The coded data were qualitatively analysed to extract meaningful insights into the teachers' self-reported instructional practices. Thematic data analysis involves organizing data into manageable codes, patterns, or themes (Peel, 2020). In our study, an inductive thematic approach was used, which entails organizing emerging data by starting with specific components and then moving towards broader generalizations (Maree, 2019). This method is considered fundamental for identifying, analysing, organizing, describing, and reporting emerging themes in qualitative analysis (Nieuwenhuis, 2019) allowing for a critical analysis of the data and the establishment of a comprehensive set of themes. To analyse the data collected in my study on effective teaching strategies for teaching reading comprehension to primary school non-readers, we followed Tracy's (2019) step-by-step approach. Firstly, specific interactions in the raw data were identified. Next, general patterns were conceptualized from the emerging data. A close reading of the data was then undertaken before organizing them into patterns or themes. Finally, conclusions were drawn to build a theory or create an engaging narrative (Tracy, 2019). This inductive thematic analysis approach provided a structured and systematic way to explore and understand the data gathered from the study context.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in research encompass various aspects, including the dissemination of knowledge and information, as well as the protection of study participants, and should be carefully addressed throughout the different phases of the inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure ethical compliance, we sought approval from the Ethics Clearance Committee at Rhodes University before conducting the study. Additionally, we obtained necessary permissions from all relevant gatekeepers involved in the research. Permission to conduct the study was requested from various stakeholders, including the Director of Education Oshana Region (DoE), the Inspector of Education, school principals from the Ompundja Circuit, Grade 5 ESL teachers, and parents or guardians of the participating learners. Furthermore, we provided a letter of assent to the learners to ensure their understanding and agreement to take part in the research. The study participants were guaranteed several ethical considerations, including informed consent, which ensured that they were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks involved.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following discussion is based on the themes that emerged from an integrated analysis of the data we generated from the stimulated interviews and classroom observations. Table 1 summarises the themes and sub-themes generated.

Table 1: Summary of themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes		
Theme 1: Pre- reading activities for non-readers	**Sub-theme 1.1:** Vocabulary instruction to facilitate reading among non-readers	**Sub-theme 1.2**: Linguistics resources for non-readers	
Theme 2: Instructional reinforcement strategies to consolidate non-readers' prior knowledge	**Sub-theme 2.1:** Activating non-readers' prior knowledge in reading comprehension.	**Sub-theme 2.2:** Classroom interactions to promote reading comprehension among non-readers.	**Sub-theme 2.3:** Motivation as a strategy for enhancing non-readers' reading comprehension
Theme 3: Anticipatory strategies for teaching reading comprehension to non-readers	**Sub-theme 3.1:** Read-aloud strategy to enhance reading comprehension among non-readers.	**Sub-theme 3.1:** Traditional strategies for teaching reading comprehension to non-readers	

Theme 1: Instructional reinforcement strategies to consolidate non-readers' prior knowledge

Based on the findings, pre-reading activities refer to teacher-learner activities conducted before reading a text. These activities aim to prepare non-readers by activating their background knowledge, introducing new vocabulary, and familiarising them with contextual meanings. The goal is to cultivate active readers who can read for meaning. This theme includes two sub-themes, vocabulary instruction to facilitate reading among non-readers and linguistics resources for non-readers.

Vocabulary instruction plays a pivotal role in reading comprehension for non-readers. Understanding the contextual meanings of unfamiliar words and complex sentence structures is crucial before delving into the main reading process. The Grade 5 teachers employ various strategies to expand non-readers' vocabulary knowledge to improve their reading comprehension. During classroom observations, Lukas engaged learners in reading a short, simple text aloud to enrich their vocabulary before tackling the main text. He emphasized the importance of arousing non-readers' interest in reading independently. Nelly wrote new words and their meanings on the whiteboard, initiating whole-class oral discussions to explain the vocabulary. Learners were encouraged to construct their own sentences using these words, reinforcing their understanding. Additionally, Nelly elaborated on key features and themes prior to reading to strengthen literacy development.

Zoe utilized a vocabulary board chart to aid a struggling non-reader with the word "fear." By providing verbal clues and referencing the chart, she motivated the learner until the word was pronounced correctly. Zoe's vocabulary chart included phonics-related words, and she explained the significance of phonics and the dictionary method in enhancing non-readers' reading comprehension. Manipulatives were employed by Zoe to instruct vocabulary, with non-readers

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highlighting unfamiliar words in the story and noting their meanings and pronunciations in their notebooks. Chris also used a vocabulary chart to integrate the comprehension lesson with proper and common nouns, helping learners understand when to use capital letters in their responses. Linah's pre-reading activity involved whole-class oral discussions of new vocabulary with the aid of flashcards, emphasizing the benefits of vocabulary instruction to improve comprehension.

Zoe's use of the phonic method through her vocabulary chart and Lukas' approach of using a shorter text for vocabulary enrichment are both effective strategies in the Namibian primary school context for enhancing non-readers' reading comprehension, even though they are not extensively discussed in existing literature. The pre-reading activities play a vital role in preparing non-readers for reading comprehension. Vocabulary instruction, including the use of charts, manipulatives, and oral discussions, is a fundamental aspect of these activities. The participants' diverse strategies demonstrate their dedication to improving non-readers' reading abilities and comprehension skills. By activating linguistic schemas and employing innovative methods, teachers can foster a love for reading and equip non-readers with essential literacy skills.

The study participants are reflective practitioners who can connect schema theory and a variety of teaching aids in promoting non-readers' reading comprehension. All the study participants' lesson plans applied reflection-for-action in coming up with linguistic resources such as pictures, a hoe, and the magic white papers. They also all utilised the teaching aids as stipulated in their lesson plans. This means that they used reflection-for-action in identifying the appropriate resources for non-readers, basing them on their needs identified in the previous lessons. This is in line with Cirocki and Widodo (2019), who recommend reflection-for-action to provide teachers with a summative evaluation of a lesson which can be used as guidelines for making future improvements.

The picture of a hospital and the story pictures used by Chris and Lukas respectively activated non-readers' content schemas in reading comprehension and prepared them for reading for meaning. In relation to the literature, Geng et al. (2019) acknowledge visual stimulation using teaching aids such as pictures, images and word visuals as having a great impact in promoting motivation and concentration in reading. In agreement, about content schema, Pardede (2008) recommend familiarisation with information related to the text as a significant factor in promoting struggling readers in reading comprehension; this was done by all the participants. Additionally, Maja (2019) recognises linguistic resources such as charts and pictures as vital in literacy development. With reference to the literature, Caga and Soya (2019) report that teaching reading comprehension inculcates a plethora of strategies and resources that meet the learners' needs.

In contrast, Linah and Nelly used real objects such as a digging hoe and the magic white papers which both the literature and theoretical framework are silent about. Basically, many ESL teachers in southern Africa acknowledge the integration of realia to relate comprehension passages to real-life situations as a strategy for reading comprehension in non-readers in the mainstream. Although, Linah and Zoe did not use their improvised libraries during lesson observation, some of the available printed material such as novels, short story booklets, old newspaper articles and magazines correlate with the linguistic resources prescribed by the Namibian Ministry of Education (MoEAC, 2016), which stipulates the use of magazines, newspaper articles, comic strips and library books in teaching reading comprehension.

Theme 2: Instructional reinforcement strategies to consolidate non-readers' prior knowledge

The participants revealed that they used instructional reinforcement strategies to consolidate non-readers' prior knowledge in mainstream reading lessons. Reinforcement strategies

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are teaching approaches used to promote learners' understanding in the teaching-learning process. The focus of this study is on activating non-readers' prior knowledge, classroom interactions, and motivation as key strategies to foster comprehension. Activating prior knowledge involves exposing learners to relevant information in a text before reading it, connecting it with their existing knowledge. Participants in the study implemented various strategies to activate non-readers' background knowledge. For instance, teachers linked the text with real-life situations or conducted oral discussions of reading comprehension rules to engage learners' existing knowledge. Zoe connected her non-readers' background knowledge with the text by asking all those who had lost any of their belongings since the beginning of the year to raise their hands and then asked them about their feelings thereafter. In the same vein, in relation to the text, Chris activated readers' prior knowledge by asking if they had once injured themselves while playing and to narrate what happened after the injury occurred. Unlike the other study participants, Lukas opted to activate his learners' prior knowledge by engaging them in an oral discussion of the reading comprehension rules. Learners were asked to state the procedures to be followed in reading comprehension in chronological order.

Effective classroom interactions are crucial for fostering reading comprehension among non-readers. The study participants employed teacher-learner and learner-learner interactions to create a supportive learning environment. Strategies like partner reading, group work, and whole-class discussions were used to enhance understanding. Pairing struggling readers with proficient ones proved particularly beneficial. Lukas opted to make use of partner reading in the reading process whereby he paired each of his non-readers with a proficient reader and this was clearly stated in the lesson plan. Moreover, he catered for non-readers by putting them in one group and doing shared reading with them, assisting them where necessary. Similarly, Linah did partner reading as well and a whole-class oral discussion on the text. She was also prompt in attending to non-readers' problems which arose in the lesson. Additionally, Nelly utilised teacher–learner interactions by assisting non-readers by giving them hints/clues to finding the correct answers to the comprehension questions in groups. Chris, in the same way as Lukas, gave learner support to the non-readers by putting them in one group and helping them to do the classwork under his supervision and guidance.

Motivation plays a pivotal role in improving reading comprehension among non-readers. Participants utilized verbal and written encouragement, positive feedback, and rewards to boost learners' confidence and interest in reading. Praising learners for progress, providing support, and recognizing efforts helped instil a sense of achievement and enthusiasm. Zoe patiently encouraged a frustrated non-reader, who had almost given up trying to read a difficult word. As a motivational strategy she asked the whole class to applaud her. The drastic change in the non-reader's sad face to a happy one after the round of applause by the rest of the class, to show their appreciation before she took her seat. Lukas motivated his non-readers in an extraordinary manner. I was thrilled to learn of two motivational comments which were interchangeably incorporated in stimulating non-readers' interest in the lesson. For every correct answer all the learners chorused "WELL DONE! WELL, DONE! WELL, DONE!" while chanting "TRY-TRY-TRY AGAIN!" to any wrong answer, accompanied by a round of applause in both scenarios.

The above findings indicate that the study participants are reflective practitioners who are well informed about their practices and knowledgeable about when and how to motivate reading comprehension in non-readers. For example, all the participants motivated their non-readers by praising them verbally and in written form, encouraging them in writing complete answers to comprehension questions as complete meaningful sentences and to ask for help when anything

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hindered their progress in reading comprehension. This aligns with Fatemipour (2013) who recognises the importance of reflective practice in enhancing teachers' awareness of their learners' individual needs and taking note of the usefulness of their practices. This resonates with Schmidt *et al.* (2021) who claim that motivated learners are likely to confide in their teachers and increase their potential in reading comprehension. This relates to how the frustrated boy mentioned by Linah developed an interest in reading and the non-reader from Zoe's class who managed to read a difficult word with the teacher's encouragement. In agreement, Nkomo (2021) acknowledges the effectiveness of motivation for academic purposes and for pleasure. The motivational comments and the use of merits used by Lukas and Linah are positive reinforcement strategies which are essential in motivating Grade 5 non-readers in reading comprehension. This corresponds with the literature, as Geng et al. (2019) recommend that teachers identify the type of motivation suitable for their learners and implement it effectively.

Theme 3: Anticipatory strategies for teaching reading comprehension to non-readers
The participants also used anticipatory strategies used by Grade 5 ESL teachers to enhance reading comprehension among non-readers. Anticipatory strategies differ from general teaching techniques and are tailored to address the specific needs of non-readers. The study focuses on two sub-themes: the read-aloud strategy and traditional strategies for teaching reading comprehension to non-readers.

The read-aloud strategy involves the teacher or a peer reading a text aloud while the rest of the class listens and follows along. This shared reading technique can include oral discussions of the text to aid comprehension. Participants in the study consistently used the read-aloud strategy in their lessons, acknowledging its positive impact on academic growth, fluency, and literacy development among non-readers. During classroom observation, all the participants utilised a read-aloud strategy in their lessons, and this was also clearly stated in their lesson plans. Lukas grouped the non-readers in one group and read the story at a slow pace as he paused t intervals to check their comprehension by asking questions related to the text. He then asked them to read the passage aloud one after the other. Comparably, Linah read the comprehension passage aloud, observing all the punctuation marks, as the whole class listened and followed during the reading and later had an oral discussion about the story at the end. Additionally, Zoe read aloud the story in a captivating way incorporating a variety of pitch, tone and pauses which drew all the learners' attention and concentration in listening and following in reading together with her. She continuously asked the learners to close their workbooks after finishing reading each paragraph and asked them questions based on the paragraph till the story was completed.

The above findings clearly show that the study participants had a clear understanding of the fundamental role played by a read-aloud strategy in teaching primary school non-readers. They activated non-readers' content and formal schemas. Lukas and Chris read the text aloud to a group of non-readers while Nelly used individual learners and groupings in reading aloud to their peers. These findings concur with Cilliers et al. (2018) who acknowledge a read-aloud strategy as giving teachers the opportunity of giving full attention to learners individually or in small groups and in identifying the root cause of their learning barrier/s and finding effective technique/s to eliminate them. Linah, Lukas and Chris gave credit to the read-aloud assessment for identifying non-readers in the interviews. With reference to my literature, the Grades 4–5 ESL syllabus (MoEAC, 2016) recommends the use of read-aloud assessment in understanding learners' reading competences. In the same vein, Giusto and Ehri (2019) propound reading aloud assessment as exclusively suited for non-readers and their findings indicate a remarkable improvement in L2 poor decoders with

average listening comprehension skills. This aligns with Lukas's opinion that reading aloud is helpful in identifying non-readers in a mainstream class and Chris's opinion that it helps in diagnosing non-readers.

Traditional strategies refer to various techniques that teachers use to guide learners in making sense of texts. These methods are chosen based on non-readers' individual needs and may include scanning, summarization, and prediction. Chris incorporated summarisation as a post-reading activity. Like Chris, Linah asked a few individuals to summarise the story in their own words. In carrying out the classwork activity, she emphasised that they should read the comprehension questions first and then go back to the passage to search for the suitable answers – scanning. Nelly paused the learners at intervals during the reading process and asked them to make predictions of future scenes of the story. She also demonstrated how to skim and scan for the correct answer and later asked the learners to choose the strategy which they found easier to follow in answering to the comprehension questions. Zoe asked the learners to predict the story just after a mere reading of its title "Lost and Found". In the pre-reading activities, she further instructed them not to read the whole text but to scan through it searching for unfamiliar words and to highlight them, then she later demonstrated how to skim and scan for the answer in reading comprehension.

The findings reveal that all the study participants implemented the teaching strategies they had planned for in their lessons and activated non-readers' formal schemas. They also all implemented a scanning strategy in their lessons in helping non-readers in finding the correct answers to the given questions. In the literature, Mambuya (2020) claims it as a speed-reading technique enhancing learners in the rapid extraction of the targeted information from reading material and saving them time in answering comprehension questions. Linah and Chris also executed a summarisation strategy vital in assisting non-readers in giving a shorter account of the text in their own words. This concurs with Stevens et al. (2019) who affirm summarisation for developing primary school non-readers' literacy skills and comprehension. Nelly and Zoe chose to utilise both skimming and scanning strategies in conducting their comprehension activity with the non-readers in a mainstream class. Skimming and scanning strategies are supported by Darmawan (2016), who recommends that teachers train non-readers to search for specified information and discourage them from reading the whole text, using skimming, and scanning strategies instead.

Discussion

The study's findings offer valuable insights into the positive impact of instructional reinforcement strategies, particularly in the context of teaching reading comprehension to non-readers. These findings underscore the importance of these strategies in promoting comprehension, but it is essential to look deeper into why certain learners responded more favourably to these strategies and if there were any differences based on learners' prior knowledge levels. This deeper exploration can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the instructional methods employed.

Firstly, the study participants emphasised the critical role of making connections between the text and readers' prior experiences and knowledge. This practice was found to be a fundamental component of understanding the presented text. Research supports this notion, with Paul and Christopher (2017) highlighting the activation of prior knowledge as a crucial factor in achieving a high level of comprehension. Furthermore, comprehension monitoring, which involves asking and answering questions while reading, was noted as effective in promoting critical thinking and

comprehension, in alignment with Wibowo et al. (2020). Additionally, the importance of highlighting text by underlining new vocabulary, main ideas, and sub-themes using a pencil or a highlighter, as well as understanding contextual meanings before reading, was emphasized. This aligns with Xue (2019), who recommends fostering learners' vocabulary knowledge through oral discussions of new words, titles, and subtitles, as well as complex sentences. The study also emphasized the significance of instructing learners on story structure, which involves identifying the plot, characters, and setting. Moving on to the activation of linguistic schemas in pre-reading activities, the study found that various strategies were effective, including the dictionary method, manipulatives, and the use of glossaries. The dictionary method empowered students to explore and comprehend the meanings of unfamiliar words independently, expanding their vocabulary and deepening their connection with the text. Incorporating manipulatives and tactile objects provided non-readers with a hands-on, kinesthetic approach to learning, facilitating the activation of linguistic schemas. This approach allowed them to grasp the content more concretely and relate to it in a more tangible manner.

The study also highlighted the effectiveness of employing glossaries to define new words, providing clear and concise definitions for unfamiliar vocabulary. This method not only enhanced comprehension but also encouraged learners to explore language and meaning, contributing to the development of their linguistic schemas. The literature reviewed in this study further supports the efficacy of these strategies. For instance, Wibowo et al. (2020) recommend that teachers should train non-readers in selecting appropriate definitions from dictionaries, as definitions are often not contextualized. Van den Berg and Klapwijk (2020) advocate for the use of glossaries, synonyms, and elaboration of new words as successful strategies for teaching vocabulary instruction. Moreover, the use of visual aids, such as pictures, images, and wall visuals, was found to have a significant impact on motivating and engaging non-readers in the reading process, as supported by Geng et al. (2019). Instructional reinforcement strategies were noted as paramount in preparing non-readers for reading with meaning, including motivation, activation of background knowledge through oral discussions, and discussion of reading comprehension rules. In terms of motivation, motivated learners are more likely to engage with their teachers, as noted by Schmidt et al. (2021). Geng et al. (2019) further recommend that teachers should identify the type of motivation that works for each learner and use it effectively.

The study's findings emphasise the effectiveness of various instructional reinforcement strategies in promoting reading comprehension among non-readers. The literature reviewed in the study provides additional support for these strategies and highlights the importance of motivation, contextualization, and active engagement in the reading process to facilitate a deeper and more meaningful understanding of text, particularly for non-readers with varying levels of prior knowledge.

Limitations of the Study

In this section, we discuss the limitations of our qualitative research approach, highlighting the measures we employed to address these constraints. Firstly, a limitation of this study was the small sample size, which consisted of just five Grade 5 teachers. While this sample size was suitable for the specific scope and objectives of our research, it is essential to acknowledge that this limited number of participants may not comprehensively represent the full spectrum of teaching practices within the broader educational landscape of the Oshana region in Namibia. To mitigate the potential impact of this limitation, we implemented an in-depth and prolonged data collection process, enabling us to gather rich and detailed insights from our participants, thus

compensating to some extent for the small sample size. Another recognised limitation in our qualitative research is the potential for subjectivity in the interpretation of responses, a common concern in this research methodology. Our study findings are linked to the perceptions and reflections of the participating teachers. To enhance the credibility and validity of our interpretations, we utilized member checking, a practice in which participants confirmed the accuracy of the interpretations attributed to them, thus strengthening the trustworthiness of our analysis. Additionally, to further mitigate subjectivity in data interpretation, we maintained a reflexive stance throughout the research process, encouraging critical self-reflection to minimize the influence of our own perspectives and biases on the findings. These methodological strategies have been implemented to ensure that our research provides a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the instructional practices and experiences of Grade 5 teachers in the Oshana region, despite the inherent limitations of our approach.

CONCLUSION

The study findings clearly show that the participants activated non-readers' linguistic schemas in pre-reading activities using manipulatives, dictionaries and definitions of new words using glossaries. They also acknowledged linguistic scaffolding, incorporating teaching aids such as flashcards, wall posters, real objects, and pictures to expand non-readers' vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension. Additionally, they claimed that instructional reinforcement strategies, for example motivating non-readers verbally or non-verbally helped elicit their interest in reading. Furthermore, activation of prior knowledge through oral discussions based on the text, games related to the text, and discussion of reading comprehension rules foster non-readers' reading comprehension. They also reported that classroom interactions, for example partner reading, group work and whole class discussions, enhance non-readers' reading comprehension. The participants recommended reading aloud, the phonic method, prediction, summarisation and skimming and scanning as traditional strategies for teaching reading comprehension to non-readers. Most importantly, they strongly believed that teachers' beliefs and expertise enabled them to reflect on their teaching, identifying texts and pedagogical activities that were in line with non-readers' level of literacy development. Above all, appropriate teaching strategies that incorporate schema theory, reflective practice, and teachers' expertise, work collectively in improving non-readers' competency in reading comprehension.

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