NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO

READING CLUBS AS INTERVENTION TOWARDS IMPROVING READING FOR COMPREHENSION AT HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL: AN ACTION RESEARCH CASE STUDY AT ONE HIGH SCHOOL IN MASERU DISTRICT IN LESOTHO

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DECLARATION

I, 'Matiisetso Maria Mohapi, hereby declare that this work- Reading Clubs as intervention towards improving reading for comprehension at high school level, submitted herewith, is my work and mine alone. Wherever I have cited other scholarly work, I have duly acknowledged the authors. To the best of my knowledge, this work has not been submitted to any learning institution, in part or in full, for the awarding of any degree.

Signature……………………………………….

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my son, Nkhame Euphras Mohapi (EJ). I want you to grow up knowing that dreams are achievable, and to never dim your light for anyone.

Abstract

The Examiners' Reports from the Examinations Council of Lesotho have highlighted a concerning pattern of consistent decline in English Language proficiency among high school learners, particularly in the area of Reading Comprehension. In response to this issue, an action research case study was undertaken to investigate the efficacy of reading clubs as an intervention aimed at enhancing reading comprehension skills among high school students in Lesotho.

This study was informed by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning and employed a mixed methods research approach. Data collection methods included focus group interviews, one-on-one interviews, classroom observations, document analysis, documentary evidence and the maintenance of a reflective journal. The collected data was analysed through a thematic analysis conducted inductively.

As an intervention study, the effectiveness of reading clubs in improving reading for comprehension was assessed through a pre-test, an intervention test, and a post-intervention test. The study's findings indicate that reading clubs can indeed be effective tools for enhancing reading comprehension skills among high school students. Furthermore, the results shed light on some of the potential factors contributing to the persistently poor performance in Reading Comprehension at the high school level in Lesotho.

In light of these findings, this study strongly recommends the implementation of reading clubs in schools as a means to enhance reading comprehension among high school students in Lesotho.

Keywords*: Reading for comprehension, reading clubs, literacy improvement, sociocultural theory*

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ECoL: Examinations Council of Lesotho

ESL: English as Second Language

FGIs: Focus Group Interviews

HOD: Head of Department

JC: Junior Certificate

LEA: Language Experience Approach

LEC: Lesotho Electricity Company

LGCSE: Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education

LHDA: Lesotho Highland Development Authority

Max: Maximum

Min: Minimum

MKO: More Knowledgeable Other

MoET: Ministry of Education and Training

N: No

No: Number

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PCK: Pedagogic Content Knowledge

PIRLS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment

Q&A: Question and Answer

RC: Reading Club

RCs: Reading Clubs

RQ: Research Question

SACMEQ: Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality

SRCs: Summer Reading Clubs

Y: Yes

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

1. CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

Literacy, as defined by Montoya (2018), encompasses the multifaceted ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute using printed and written materials within various contextual frameworks. Additionally, Valtin et al. (2016), provide a complementary definition, characterising literacy as the capability to read and write proficiently, enabling individuals to comprehend and employ written communication across all forms of media, including both print and electronic, encompassing digital literacy.

Rintaningrum (2009) further contributes to the discourse on literacy by asserting that it encompasses individuals' capacity to utilise written information to accomplish their objectives. Consequently, literacy empowers individuals to function effectively within modern societies, giving rise to the concept of functional literacy. This notion, as articulated by Olaniran (2020), centres on how individuals practically employ reading, writing, and essential competencies to address both personal and societal challenges. In summation, this study confines its scope to functional literacy.

In light of the aforementioned definitions, literacy encompasses the proficiency to read and write various forms of written material, regardless of whether they are in print or electronic format. This proficiency is deemed essential for enabling individuals to function effectively not only within educational institutions but also in broader life contexts.

As elucidated, the school environment constitutes a microcosm of society, and literacy plays a pivotal role in equipping learners with the requisite skills to adeptly engage with academic tasks. Quigley and Coleman (2019) underscore the significance of literacy, emphasizing its centrality to success across diverse curricular domains. Rintaningrum (2009) reinforces this perspective by contending that literacy not only contributes to personal development and learning but also fosters achievement in both educational and life spheres. In alignment with these viewpoints, Spaull and Hoadley (2017) posit that literacy's value extends beyond the confines of the classroom, ideally arming children with knowledge, competencies, and confidence to actively participate in society.

Moreover, Spaull and Hoadley (2017) propose that literacy serves as the bedrock of quality education, possessing the potential to unlock human potential and enhance outcomes throughout the lifespan. It contributes to children's well-being, skill development, productivity, inclusive economic growth, and the exercise of their rights and freedoms.

Collectively, this reviewed literature underscores the profound importance of literacy, particularly among school-age children, as it establishes a robust foundation for success in both academic and personal domains. Without proficient literacy skills, children encounter manifold challenges in life, as emphasized by Quigley and Coleman (2019). They note that young individuals exiting

formal education with inadequate literacy skills experience impediments at every life stage, resulting in inferior outcomes across multiple dimensions, spanning health, well-being, employment, and financial stability.

Hence, it is apparent that literacy plays an integral role in achieving success across various facets of life, necessitating the cultivation of sound literacy skills from the primary education level. This foundational literacy proficiency empowers students to navigate the curriculum effectively and, consequently, enhances their academic performance.

However, notwithstanding the pivotal role of literacy in academic and personal development, disconcerting challenges and reports have surfaced regarding low literacy levels among primary school learners and adolescent readers, as detailed in the ensuing discussion.

1.1.1. Adolescent readers

Adolescence is a critical stage between childhood and adulthood (Hashmi and Fayyaz, 2022; Sawyer et. al., 2018; Laird, 2013 & Sikszentmihalyi, 2024). It is often considered a period between puberty and legal adulthood (Laird, 2013), which can be between the ages of eleven and eighteen years (Brooks-Yip and Koonce, 2010) or between the ages of eleven and twenty-two (Allen and Waterman, 2019). It captures the notion of a growing individual who is able to take increasing responsibility, but who still needs more protection than an adult (Sawyer et. al., 2018). It is also a time to develop knowledge and skills, learn to manage emotions and relationships, and acquire attributes and abilities that will enable adolescents to assume adult responsibilities (World Health Organisation, 2020).

Based on this reviewed literature, adolescence is a developmental period between childhood and adulthood, spanning the period between eleven and twenty-two years. Thus, adolescents are old enough to assume some degree of responsibility for their actions but at the same time, they are still not old enough to be treated as fully-fledged adults for they have not yet reached legal age. As already stated, there are many literacy challenges that adolescents face, and the discussion below elaborates on such.

1.1.2. Literacy challenges for adolescent readers

Many adolescents struggle with the act of reading itself (Brooks-Yip and Koonce, 2010; Pitcher et. al., 2010; Greenleaf and Hinchman, 2009). Many adolescents in middle and high school are not able to read, write, listen, speak and think at grade level (Plaut, 2009). This challenge is substantiated by Ming (2018), who argues that almost two thirds of Grade 4 and Grade 8 students are below grade level in their overall reading performance, and Rickets et al (2020), who state that international assessments show that 20% of adolescents cannot read simple texts with understanding. In some cases, the reading challenge amongst adolescents is so extreme that some parents pay for reading specialists for their children to assist with reading outside of the school hours (Pitcher et al., 2010). The challenge is even worse in poor countries where 70% of the children are unable to read a simple text by age ten (World Literacy Foundation, 2024).

Another literacy challenge that adolescents face, which contributes to their inability to read is lack of basic literacy skills such as decoding, word recognition and fluency (Stover et al., 2015; Pitcher et al., 2010; Boardman et al., 2008; Ming, 2018; Deshler et al., 2006, World Literacy Foundation, 2024). This challenge is more pronounced in developing and emerging countries, where the number of adolescent readers with no basic foundational skills is rising by an estimated 20% per year (World Literacy Foundation, 2024). Consequently, these learners score below expectation in decoding, word recognition, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension (Deshler et al., 2006). For instance, the study of Pitcher et al (2010) revealed that several of the study participants scored below level on word recognition and comprehension, with extreme cases of Kathy, a Grade 8 learner whose word recognition was at Grade 6 level, and Karl, a Grade 7 learner whose word recognition was on second Grade level.

Closely related to the challenge of lack of basic literacy skills is adolescent readers' poor comprehension (Greenleaf and Hinchman, 2009; Boardman et al., 2008 & Pitcher et al., 2010). Many adolescents have a difficulty comprehending what they read (Pitcher et al., 2010; Greenleaf and Hinchman, 2009; Boardman et al., 2008; Learning Elevate, 2024 & Deshler et al., 2006). This challenge is highlighted by the study of Pitcher et al (2010) in which all the study participants tested below level for reading comprehension, with the extreme case of Kathy, a Grade 8 learner whose comprehension was at Grade 2 level.

One of the reasons for this challenge is lack of relevant background knowledge, which is critical in enhancing understanding (Deshler et al., 2006; Lee and Spratley, 2010; Greenleaf and Hinchman, 2009 & Stover et al., 2015). In order for readers to achieve comprehension, they must integrate the material in the text with their prior knowledge and experience (Deshler et al., (2006). Without this prior knowledge and experience, comprehending a text is very unlikely.

Further exacerbating the challenge of poor comprehension is adolescent readers' limited vocabulary (Lee and Spratley, 2010; Desler et al., 2006; Learning Elevate, 2024; Boardman et al., 2008; Greenlea and Hinchman, 2009; Pitcher et al., 2010 & Stover et al., 2015). As a result of this challenge, adolescent readers fail to understand texts (Greenleaf et al., 2009) and this is worrisome to parents (Pitcher et al., 2010). According to Learning Elevate (2024) the challenge of limited vocabulary is caused by learners' lack of exposure to diverse reading materials. Thus, in order for adolescents to become better readers, they must have adequate practice reading books at their reading levels (Ming, 2018) and engage in extensive reading of diverse texts (Stover et al., 2015).

Another challenge that affects adolescent readers' literacy performance is lack of autonomy with regard to books they read in school (Clark, 2016; Webber et al., 2023; Pitcher et al., 2010; Stover et al., 2015; Laird, 2013; Wilkinson et al., 2020). For instance, in the study of Pitcher et al (2010) some learners expressed that they had no voice in what they read as the teacher picked the stories and books for them. Others went to the extent of saying they were forced to read books they were not really interested in, such as Shakespeare (Pitcher et al., 2010).

As already mentioned that adolescence is a developmental stage between childhood and adulthood (Laird, 2013; Sawyer, et al., 2018; Hashmi and Fayza, 2022 & Sikszentmihalyi, 2024), many adolescents strive for autonomy to choose their own reading materials (Clark, 2016; Webber et al., 2023; Stover et al., 2015). When this autonomy is not granted, adolescents do not enjoy reading (Guthie et al., 2005). The importance of giving learners autonomy to choose their own reading materials is emphasised by several studies (Clark, 2016; Pitcher et al., 2010; Carbo, 2010). Clark (2016) for instance, asserts that the more opportunities learners have to make choices and control their own learning, the more personally relevant the learning experiences become. In corroboration, Skerret and Bomer (2011) emphasise that choice greatly influences engagement, which consequently improves comprehension and retention. Thus, one way to enhance adolescent readers' literacy skills is by giving them autonomy to choose their own reading materials.

Closely related to the issue of lack of autonomy to choose reading materials is the challenge of mismatch between the books learners encounter in schools and their reading interests. In elaboration, Wilkinson et al (2020), points out that some learners struggle to find books that interest them. The importance of learners' interest in the materials they read is alluded to by Clark (2016), who argues that the opportunity to make choices based on personal interest encourages reading engagement. Carbo (2020) also reiterates the importance of learners choosing texts that interest them by explaining that students must be deeply interested in what they are reading in order to do their best. The need for alignment between learners' interests and reading materials is further corroborated by Wilkinson et al (2020), who profess that it is crucial that available resources align with students' interests and abilities.

Another literacy challenge for adolescent readers, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds is lack of access to reading materials (Webber et al., 2023; Wilkinson et al., 2020 Kay, 2024). This is because these learners do not have financial means to buy books (Webber et al., 2023; Wilkinson et al., 2020; Kay, 2024; Learning Elevate, 2024). This challenge is so grave that less than 20% of children in low-income backgrounds own books (Kay, 2024 & Learning Elevate, 2024). If this challenge is not addressed, these learners will not only continue to under-perform in literacy assessments, but they will also face a lifetime of poverty and unemployment (Kay, 2024).

Besides lack of access to books, some adolescent readers also face the challenge of learning disabilities such as dyslexia and dysgraphia, which affect their ability to engage with literacy effectively (Learning Elevate, 2024; International Dyslexia Association, 2017; Rapus-Pavel and Vitalic, 2018; Eissa, 2010; Winn, 2020). Learning disabilities are neurological deficiencies that affect the cognitive processes involved in the acquisition, processing and demonstration of received information (Aremu and Adewunmi, 2023). These deficiencies are called learning disabilities because they make it very difficult for students to succeed academically in the typical instruction classroom. According to Aremu and Adewunmi (2023), these deficiencies manifest in the acquisition, retention, mastery and execution of the skills of reading (dyslexia), Mathematics (dyscalculia) and writing (dysgraphia).

For instance, dyslexia is characterised by difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition, poor spelling and decoding abilities (International Dyslexia Association, 2017; Learning Elevate, 2024 & Eissa, 2010). Additional challenges brought about by dyslexia may include problems with reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can hinder vocabulary development and background knowledge (International Dyslexia Association, 2017 & Rapus-Pavel, 2018). That is, adolescent learners suffering from dyslexia experience difficulties in spelling words correctly, pronouncing words correctly, reading words correctly and consequently, they struggle with comprehension and vocabulary.

Dysgraphia on the other hand affects the writing ability of learners such that learners with dysgraphia manifest difficulties in one or more aspects of writing skills, which may include spelling, organisation, clarity, accuracy, speed and many more (Aremu and Adewunmi, 2023; Crouch and Jakubecy, 2007; Chung and Patel, 2015). In addition, many learners with dysgraphia are not able to keep up with written assignments, cannot put coherent thoughts on paper or write legibly (Crouch and Jakubecy, 2007). Thus, unlike their peers, learners with dysgraphia struggle more when it comes to writing skills because of this neurological deficiency.

As literature shows, adolescent learners with learning disabilities such as dyslexia and dysgraphia find it very hard to engage in literacy activities effectively, which ultimately results in them underperforming not only in literacy assessments, but across the curriculum.

The discussion above has detailed some of the literacy challenges that adolescent readers face, which contribute to the disheartening literacy performance globally, particularly in Lesotho.

1.1.3. Motivation for the study

This study was influenced by my role as an English Inspector, with two primary motivations. Firstly, I observed the struggles that teachers encountered when teaching the subject, including those holding Master's degrees. This led me to recognise the necessity of pursuing a Master's Degree to enhance my pedagogical content knowledge in English. My aim was to better assist the teachers I was responsible for supporting, irrespective of their qualifications, without feeling intimidated. Secondly, there was a concerning decline in English Language performance nationwide. During our visits to schools, teachers consistently voiced their concerns about Grade 8 students' inability to express themselves in English, with some even struggling to write their own names. Consequently, I enrolled in a Master's programme with my initial research topic centered on "causes of poor performance in English Language at the high school level."

I believed that this topic would provide valuable insights into the underlying factors contributing to the subpar performance in English Language at high schools in Lesotho. Unfortunately, my supervisor disapproved of this topic, asserting that, as a subject inspector, I was already acquainted with the causes of poor performance, and there was an abundance of existing literature on the subject. Instead, he urged me, as the responsible officer, to undertake an intervention study aimed at improving English Language performance. Initially, I was disheartened by this directive, as I

had already amassed a substantial amount of material related to my initial research topic, and the prospect of starting anew was daunting.

After extensive research and careful consideration, I opted to explore the use of reading clubs as an intervention to enhance Reading for Comprehension. This decision was influenced by my prior experience as a high school teacher. During my tenure at my previous school, we implemented what we termed a "moving library." Despite its limited physical space, this room was well-stocked with captivating books covering a wide array of subjects. Students were permitted to visit the library, borrow books of their choice, read them outside the library, and return them within a fortnight. For my Form E class, we agreed that throughout the year, they would engage in this practice, and every Thursday, during our double lesson, they would share their reading experiences with the class. This exercise yielded remarkable results, notably improving my students' performance in English Language during external examinations. I distinctly recall one student who had been struggling in all subjects, including English Language, but when the Form E results were released, she had failed all subjects except English, where she achieved a credit C grade. This somewhat forgotten experience served as the inspiration for my research topic. However, this time, it involved the establishment of a reading club, focused specifically on enhancing Reading for Comprehension—a skill that, as previously mentioned, is known to be relatively underperformed in comparison to Composition Writing in Lesotho. More on the literacy challenge is elucidated in the discussion that follows.

1.1.4. Literacy performance in America

Literacy challenges are not confined by geographical boundaries, as evident from the longstanding issue of low literacy performance in the United States dating back to the 1990s. Binkley and Williams (1996) reported that American students' performance, relative to the achievement standards established by the National Assessment Governing Board, indicated that they did not attain sufficient levels of reading proficiency. Similarly, Rojas-Torres et al. (2021) asserted that in 2018, ten American countries participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests. In all countries within the region, except for Chile, more than 40% of students scored at Level 1 in reading literacy. In contrast, countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) averaged only 22% of students at this level. Level 1 is the lowest proficiency level, falling below the baseline proficiency Level 2, at which readers begin to exhibit the competencies necessary for effective participation in various aspects of life as continuing students, workers, and citizens (PISA for Development Brief 8, 2016).

Furthermore, Rojas-Torres et al. (2021) contended that these results indicated that nearly half of 15-year-old students in Latin America possessed very low levels of reading literacy, signifying their limited understanding of explicit or literal information in short texts. This alarming statistic underscores the severity of low literacy levels in America and underscores the urgent need for remediation.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial survey assessing 15-year-old students' acquisition of essential knowledge and skills required for full societal

participation, with a focus on proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science (Country Note, 2018). Reading literacy, as defined by Mullis et al. (2015), encompasses "the ability to understand and use written language forms required by society and valued by the individual. Readers can construct meaning from texts in a variety of forms. They read to learn, to participate in communities..." (p. 12).

The problem of low literacy performance in America becomes even more pronounced when examining the comparative performance among different racial or ethnic groups and various social and economic strata. According to Binkley et al. (1996), disparities persist, with black students, those from impoverished backgrounds, and children of poorly educated parents consistently at a disadvantage concerning reading proficiency. Data from both Grades 4 and 9 reveal that the average performance of white students significantly surpasses that of their black and Hispanic peers in each dimension of reading comprehension (Binkley et al., 1996). Thus, despite America's performance on international literacy assessments, a significant literacy crisis persists in the country, demanding immediate attention.

Moreover, the issue of low literacy is not unique to Europe and America; it is also a prominent concern in Australia, as discussed briefly below.

1.1.5. Literacy performance in Australia

Similar to Europe and America, Australia also grapples with the formidable challenge of literacy, as substantiated by Thomson (2019). Thomson's report reveals that since the inception of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) evaluation of reading literacy in 2000, Australia's mean score has experienced a decline equivalent to three-quarters of a standard schooling year. The documented decrease in Australia's literacy performance is further corroborated by the Country Note (2018). This prevailing crisis in Australia becomes even more conspicuous when viewed through the lens of socioeconomic disparities. Thomson (2019) highlights that a substantial proportion of students with low literacy levels hail from disadvantaged households, while a significant number of high-performing students originate from advantaged backgrounds. In the domain of reading, Thomson observes that one in three disadvantaged students is categorised as a low 'performer,' in contrast to just one in ten among their advantaged counterparts. The OECD designates students who fail to reach the baseline level of proficiency, denoted as Level II, as low performers. At this stage, students commence demonstrating the reading skills requisite for effective participation in various aspects of life, including their ongoing education, entry into the labour market, and active engagement in society. In that regard, it is irrefutable that Australia, too, confronts a consistent deterioration in literacy performance.

Moreover, Asia is not immune to the challenge of low literacy levels, as evidenced by the ensuing discussion.

1.1.6. Literacy performance in Asia

The challenge of low literacy performance extends to Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, as highlighted by Jhingran (2019). In this region, Jhingran posits that a significant number of children

fail to achieve grade-specific language and literacy outcomes during their primary education years. For instance, Jhingran (2019) argues that a considerable proportion of children do not attain fluency in reading even by the conclusion of Grade 5, which marks the end of primary education in many countries. According to Jhingran (2019), the situation in Southeast Asia is notably dire, with nearly all countries, except Sri Lanka, reporting that between 10% and 20% of children fail to master even fundamental skills such as letter recognition.

This perspective is corroborated by ACER Discover (2020), which provides evidence that the SEA-PLM 2019 results reveal that one in three Grade 5 students continue to perform at levels expected during early primary school. In some countries within the region, the percentage of children proficient in the basics of literacy and numeracy is shockingly as low as 2%. The SEA-PLM assessment represents the first extensive regional evaluation of Grade 5 students across Southeast Asian countries and assesses three core learning domains: reading, writing, and mathematics (ACER Discover, 2020).

The issue of low literacy performance in Southeast Asia finds further support in the observations of West (2019). West contends that despite the attention drawn to Asia's remarkable education success stories, the performance of certain Asian countries, particularly those in Southeast Asia, tends to lag behind. This suggests that while Asia is indeed celebrated for its educational achievements, it is important not to overshadow the struggles faced by those countries, particularly in Southeast Asia, that struggle to perform well in literacy tests.

It is essential to recognise that the problem of low literacy levels is not limited to Europe, America, Australia, and Asia alone; it is also prevalent in South Africa, as elucidated in the subsequent discussion.

1.1.7. Literacy performance in South Africa

The challenge of literacy also persists in South Africa, as acknowledged by Spaull (2013). Irrespective of the measurement criteria employed or the grade level chosen for assessment, most South African primary school learners fall significantly below the expected curriculum standards. Additionally, they generally fail to achieve numerous fundamental literacy and numeracy milestones.

Further clarification is provided by Draper and Spaull (2015), who emphasise that the crisis in basic literacy in South Africa has not gone unnoticed by the Department of Basic Education. Since the early 2005, various national policies, strategies, campaigns, and interventions have been implemented to address this situation.

In a similar vein, Spaull and Hoadley (2017) reiterate that the reading crisis in South Africa is not a recent development, with several programmes having been launched to rectify the situation, some achieving greater success than others.

Furthermore, Spaull and Pretorius (2016) underscore the literacy crisis in South Africa by pointing out that the 2013 NEEDU (National Education and Evaluation Development Unit of South Africa)

evaluation cycle, while confirming comprehension problems identified by PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) 2006 and PIRLS 2011 among Grade 4 and 5 learners, also highlights extremely poor reading fluency skills, which are indicative of basic reading skills. PIRLS is a comprehensive assessment of fourth-grade students' reading literacy achievement, conducted on a regular five-year cycle, with each assessment linked to its predecessors, thus providing consistent data on trends in students' reading literacy based on a common achievement scale.

Based on this reviewed literature, it becomes evident that South Africa faces a significant literacy crisis. While literacy challenges are a global concern, as previously illustrated in this paper, the severity of the issue in Lesotho is exacerbated, as discussed in the subsequent section.

1.1.8. Literacy performance in Lesotho

Despite literacy challenges being prevalent in many countries worldwide, the situation in Lesotho is particularly disconcerting, with issues dating back to as early as 2000, as evidenced by African Development Fund (2007). African Development Fund reveals that between 2000 and 2003, the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) conducted a study in collaboration with the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) across fourteen English-speaking countries. The study found that standard 6 pupils in Lesotho achieved markedly poor results in comparison to their counterparts. According to African Development Fund (2007), the SACMEQ data indicates that Lesotho's students' performance falls significantly below the average, with reading scores at 451, while the average score was 500.

This issue is not confined solely to primary schools; it extends to high schools, as evidenced by the fact that it was articulated by the Ministry of Education and Training (2018). The problem has reached such severity that in 2018, the former Minister of Education and Training in Lesotho, Prof. Ntoi Rapapa, initiated the first-ever call for supplementary examinations at the Junior Certificate (JC) level due to a dismal performance, as highlighted in a statement by the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECoL) on 8th January 2018:

"Ladies and gentlemen, we wish to inform you that after careful consideration of the JC class of 2018 performance as highlighted by the Honourable Minister of Education and Training during his release of the results yesterday, that comparatively we have had a low attainment/pass rate than previous years, ECoL has considered supplementary examinations in two subjects which are core and have been done badly, thus: English and Mathematics."

Similarly, the Examinations Council of Lesotho (2017) reports a substantial challenge in students' communicative abilities, with some students having limited vocabulary, which adversely affects their comprehension of questions. This challenge is particularly pronounced in the Comprehension Paper, as reflected in all the markers' and examiners' reports for the past three years (2016, 2018, 2019), which consistently reveal learners' inability to provide a continuous summary in their own words as per the question's requirement. Instead, they tend to reproduce the passage verbatim, with only a few substituting individual words. For instance, the English Language Examiners' Report

by the Examinations Council of Lesotho (2016) notes, "They used the writer's words in their summary…. Most students used single word substitution and connectives in trying to rephrase the text" (p. 6). This trend continued in 2018, as observed in the Examinations Council of Lesotho (2018) report: "Candidates wrote a complete transcript of the text without any attempt whatsoever to render the passage into their own words" (p. 6). In 2019, the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECoL) (2019) remarked on the LGCSE English Language results for the Reading Comprehension Paper, stating, "It is recognized that some candidates copied the passage as it is and haphazardly used linking words…" (p. 9).

Furthermore, it is crucial to note that, according to the ECoL (2019), the majority of candidates performed below the average, with only a few managing to score above average. The decline in the standard of English has been drastic, and the learners' performance in English Language continues to worsen with each passing year.

1.1.9. Mitigating factors to the low literacy performance in Lesotho

Several factors may contribute to the low literacy levels in Lesotho, particularly in the English Language subject at the high school level. These factors include resource availability, teacher shortages, and school infrastructure.

One significant factor is the availability of resources, such as textbooks, classrooms, libraries, computer laboratories, electricity, and internet access, as well as the ecological positions of schools. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) (2019), Lesotho has approximately 350 high schools that offer education from Grade 8 to Grade 11, catering to a total of 98,321 learners in these grades. However, there are only 1,243 qualified English Language teachers, resulting in an alarming teacher-to-learner ratio of 1:79. This ratio falls far below the recommended standard, indicating a shortage of qualified English Language teachers in Lesotho's high schools. In comparison, African Development Fund (2007) suggests a teacher-learner ratio of 1:40. Thus, the reality in schools, as per MoET data, reveals a significant deficit in qualified English Language teachers.

Furthermore, in four high schools within Lesotho, there are no qualified English Language teachers at all. In these schools, learners are instructed by teachers who lack the qualifications to teach English Language. The detrimental impact of unqualified teachers on learners' academic performance is emphasised by ACIB (2020), which asserts that most unqualified teachers lack the competence to deliver quality instruction. ACIB (2020) also argues that there is evidence suggesting that poor academic performance among learners in rural countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, including Lesotho, is often attributed to the shortage of qualified teachers.

Inadequate infrastructure in many high schools is another challenge that can contribute to low literacy levels. Overcrowded classrooms resulting from insufficient facilities can hinder effective teaching and learning. However, the MoET (2019) reports that there is a total of 3,122 usable classrooms in high schools, and when divided by the 98,321 learners in these high schools, the

classroom-to-student ratio stands at 1:31, which aligns with acceptable standards. This ratio meets the recommendations outlined in the African Development Fund (2007).

Additionally, the shortage of libraries in high schools is a significant concern. Research by Howie et al (2017) underscores the importance of school libraries in literacy teaching and learning, indicating a positive relationship between school libraries and learner achievement. They argue that visiting libraries and borrowing books for home reading are essential components of effective literacy education. Unfortunately, in Lesotho's high schools, only 121 schools have usable libraries where learners can borrow and return books. Another 19 schools have libraries with books but lack suitable library facilities, making them unusable. Shockingly, 194 schools do not have libraries at all (MoET, 2019). These statistics reveal that only 35% of schools have functional libraries, 5% have libraries with unusable facilities, and a significant 56% lack libraries entirely. This shortage of libraries could, therefore, be another contributing factor to the low literacy levels in Lesotho.

The table below illustrates the challenge of library availability in Lesotho's high schools.

Table 1: *The challenge of lack of libraries in Lesotho's high schools*

Total number of schools	350	100%
Schools with usable libraries	121	35%
Schools with unusable libraries	19	5%
Schools without libraries	194	55%

In a school context, another invaluable resource that has gained even greater significance, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, is the computer. The pandemic, which emerged in December 2019, disrupted conventional modes of teaching and learning, which were predominantly face-to-face and classroom-based. This disruption underscored the need for schools to integrate remote learning into their educational practices. This shift is affirmed by Maphosa (2021), who highlights that the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic necessitated a departure from traditional face-to-face and in-class instruction.

Similarly, Jain, Lall, and Singh (2020) emphasise the importance of teachers adapting to today's digital world by transitioning from face-to-face teaching to online instruction when circumstances demand it. They stress the need to provide support to all students, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds.

Despite the critical role of technology, particularly computers, in facilitating remote learning and maintaining educational continuity during the pandemic, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) (2019) reports that out of the 350 high schools in Lesotho, only 135 have functional computer laboratories. In contrast, 15 schools possess computer laboratories that are unusable, while 183 high schools lack computer laboratories altogether (with some schools not providing information on this aspect). This data reveals that merely 39% of high schools in Lesotho have

operational computer laboratories, 4% have non-functional facilities, and a substantial 53% lack computer laboratories entirely.

This shortage of computer facilities implies that schools without computer laboratories faced significant challenges in delivering education during the periods of school closures prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic (Tarkar, 2020, & Chhetri & Pokhrel, 2021). As a result, this likely contributed to the decline in the 2020 LGCSE English Language results, which exhibited a 3% decrease compared to the 2019 results (Ministry of Education and Training, 2021).

The table below illustrates the extent of the challenge posed by the absence of computers in Lesotho's high schools.

Table 2: *The challenge of lack of computer laboratories in Lesotho's high schools*

Total number of schools	350	100%
Schools with usable computer laboratories	135	39%
Schools with unusable computer laboratories	15	4%
Schools without computer laboratories	183	53%

Another critical resource that can significantly contribute to the enhancement of literacy in the country is electricity. The availability of electricity in schools can play a pivotal role in facilitating learning through various means, including extending study hours for learners, enabling the use of technological devices such as computers, tablets and smartphones for educational purposes, facilitating photocopying and printing of teaching and learning materials for both teachers and students, among other benefits. As noted by Olanrele (2020), one of the advantages of access to electricity is the extension of study hours for learners, which can positively impact their academic performance.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that not all high schools in Lesotho have access to electricity. This lack of access to electricity means that schools without this essential resource are deprived of the benefits it brings, ultimately affecting literacy performance. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) (2019), out of the 350 high schools in Lesotho, only 204 have access to electricity provided by Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC), one is supplied by Lesotho Highland Development Authority (LHDA), 21 schools use solar power, 36 rely on generators, and 57 have no access to electricity or any form of power supply.

This disparity in access to electricity among schools creates challenges. Schools relying on solar power can only utilize it when weather conditions are favourable, with sufficient sunlight to power their technological devices. On cloudy, snowy, or rainy days, these schools face limitations in accessing electricity, which ultimately impacts their literacy performance. Similarly, schools depending on generators face financial burdens associated with the purchase of petrol to operate these generators, especially as petrol prices tend to fluctuate more frequently than electricity prices.

Furthermore, the ability to purchase petrol for generators depends on school fee collections. In recent years, school fee collections faced challenges, notably in 2018 and 2019 due to a nationwide teachers' strike that resulted in learners spending more time at home than in school. Parents were unwilling to pay school fees for the period when their children were not attending school. The issue of fee collection was further exacerbated by intermittent school closures in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Subsequently, schools reliant on generator power were adversely affected by poor fee collections, leading to their inability to purchase petrol and power their computers. As a result, students in these schools could not utilise school computers for learning purposes. This disparity in access to electricity is therefore one of the contributing factors to the low levels of literacy in many high schools in Lesotho. The table below illustrates the challenge of electricity availability in Lesotho's high schools.

Table 3: *Availability of electricity challenge in Lesotho's high schools*

Total number of schools	350	100%
Schools with electricity	205	59.4%
Schools with solar power	21	6%
Schools with generator power	36	10.4%
Schools without any source of power supply	57	16.5%

The challenge of access to electricity is closely related to the ecological positioning of schools. In some cases, schools are located in remote areas where learners must endure long walks from their homes to school, often resulting in fatigue and reduced capacity for effective learning (Baliyan & Khama, 2020; Lukman, 2022). These long distances can lead to students arriving at school late, further impeding their educational progress (Baliyan & Khama, 2020; Lukman, 2022). Moreover, in certain instances, students must navigate challenging terrain, including mountains, rivers, and forests, which can pose risks to their safety, particularly during heavy rains when rivers become impassable. Baliyan and Khama (2020) note that in developing countries like Lesotho, students may walk for hours in such hazardous environments. Consequently, the ecological positioning of schools, especially those in remote rural areas with long walking distances, contributes to low literacy levels in Lesotho's high schools.

Internet connectivity is another crucial resource that can enhance literacy teaching and learning in high schools. However, the availability of internet access remains limited in schools worldwide, including Sub-Saharan Africa, of which Lesotho is a part. UNICEF (2020) reports that many school-age children in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as South Asia, lack access to the internet. The presence of internet connectivity in schools, in conjunction with access to computers and electricity, can open doors to a wealth of educational resources online, allowing students to supplement their in-school learning. Research by Jan and Rehman (2020) supports the positive

impact of internet use on academic achievements, highlighting its potential to enhance literacy skills. Similarly, Soegoto and Tjokroaliponto (2018) emphasise the direct correlation between internet use for study purposes and academic achievement. Therefore, the absence of internet connectivity in Lesotho's high schools may constitute another contributing factor to the country's low literacy levels.

A shortage of prescribed textbooks in high schools is likely another factor contributing to low literacy performance in Lesotho. According to MoET (n. d.), only 60,000 English Language textbooks have been issued for Grades 8 and 9, with no textbooks available for Grades 10 and 11 as of yet. This shortage implies that learners in Grade 11 in 2020 were taught using whatever English Language textbooks their teachers could access, potentially deviating from the integrated curriculum adopted by the country. Insufficient and outdated teaching materials can adversely affect the teaching and learning process, leading to poor academic performance (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015). Additionally, the lack of textbooks has been associated with challenges in syllabus coverage, affecting both the quantity and pace of assignments given to students (Makori & Onderi, 2014). Learners who lack access to reading materials tend to perform poorly in school, especially those from resource-constrained backgrounds (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015). Thus, the shortage of English Language textbooks and the use of inappropriate curricular materials could contribute to declining performance in English Language in Lesotho's high schools, as evidenced by the 2020 LGCSE results (Ministry of Education and Training, 2021), which indicated a 3.1% decline in A* to C grades compared to 2019.

In conclusion, the reviewed literature and statistics emphasize that the literacy challenge in Lesotho, as well as globally, extends from foundational levels, such as Grades 1, 2, and 3, where learners should acquire basic literacy skills. However, many learners face literacy struggles at this early stage, which persist into high school and manifest in poor performance in public examinations.

1.2.Statement of the problem
The issue of literacy is a global concern, affecting both primary and high school levels. However, the situation is particularly alarming in Lesotho, with a history dating back to 2000 (African Development Fund (2007)) and a trend of deterioration over the years, prompting the former Minister of Education and Training to call for the first-ever supplementary examinations at the Junior Certificate level (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). This challenge is most pronounced in Lesotho's high schools, particularly in the Comprehension Paper, where examiners' reports for the years 2016, 2018, and 2019 (Examinations of Lesotho (ECoL), 2016; ECoL, 2018 & ECoL, 2019), consistently reveal learners' inability to produce summaries in their own words as required, often resorting to copying passages verbatim, with only a few capable of substituting individual words (Examinations Council of Lesotho, 2016 & 2017). The severity of this high school challenge was underscored once again by the Minister of Education and Training (MoET, 2021) when announcing the 2020 LGCSE results, which showed a 3.1% decline in the percentage of A* to C grades compared to 2019, highlighting the struggle of learners to comprehend passages

effectively. In light of this issue, this study aims to investigate the efficacy of reading clubs as an intervention strategy to enhance reading comprehension at the high school level in Lesotho

1.3. Aim of the study

This study seeks to examine the effectiveness of implementing reading clubs as an intervention strategy to enhance reading comprehension among high school students.

1.4. Research objectives

To attain the aforementioned goal, this study will be guided by the following research objectives:

1.4.1. Examine the efficacy of reading clubs in enhancing reading comprehension among high school students.

1.4.2. Implement guided reading sessions led by teachers within the context of reading clubs.

1.4.3. Facilitate the improvement of reading comprehension skills through the utilization of reading clubs.

1.5. Research questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1.5.1. What is the current state of learners' reading comprehension abilities?

1.5.2. How do reading clubs contribute to the development of comprehension skills among learners?

1.5.3. Why do learners whose reading is facilitated through the use of reading clubs respond to reading comprehension questions the way they do?

1.6. Significance of the study

This study is of significant importance due to the extensive literature review, which highlights the persistent global literacy challenges, including those in Lesotho. Therefore, it is crucial to undertake this research as an intervention to address this widespread issue. Furthermore, the study's unique nature in the context of Lesotho makes it particularly valuable, as it will contribute invaluable insights into literacy improvement, benefiting not only Lesotho but also the broader global community

1.7. Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the enduring global literacy challenge that affects primary school students who are expected to acquire reading skills. Moreover, it has underscored how this challenge exacerbates during high school years, leading to students' underperformance in external examinations. Additionally, this chapter has emphasised the particularly alarming nature of this issue within the context of Lesotho, especially in high schools where learners' deficiencies in reading comprehension have been highlighted in examiners' reports. These observations underscore the necessity of conducting this study, which aims to investigate the efficacy of reading clubs in enhancing reading comprehension among high school students.

2. CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter permeates into a comprehensive exploration of established literacy teaching approaches, along with an analysis of their respective strengths and weaknesses. These critical evaluations underscore the imperative for the implementation of a reading club intervention aimed at enhancing reading comprehension among high school students. Subsequently, the chapter furnishes an in-depth exposition of the reading club intervention by presenting a review of countries where similar initiatives have been employed to improve literacy and assess their resultant impact on learners' literacy proficiency.

Moreover, the chapter illustrates the rationale behind considering reading clubs as a viable alternative for augmenting literacy skills. It delineates the key attributes inherent to reading clubs that render them a valuable pedagogical approach for enhancing literacy. Furthermore, the chapter conducts a comparative examination of countries sharing analogous challenges in the realm of literacy with Lesotho.

In conclusion, this chapter culminates with a succinct examination of potential factors contributing to the persistent issue of subpar performance in reading comprehension within high school settings.

To elaborate further, the State of Victoria (2017) posits that effective reading proficiency necessitates a mastery of decoding, text utilisation, and text analysis. Consequently, educators are encouraged to employ an array of evidence-based strategies tailored to the specific needs of their students. Equally crucial is the prerequisite that educators possess a comprehensive understanding of the five fundamental components of reading, which comprise phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (State of Victoria 2017; Colorado Reading First, 2005; Aderholt & Burton, 2019; Learning Point Associates, 2004).

2.2. Phonemic awareness

Phonemic awareness is a widely acknowledged concept in educational literature, denoting the comprehension that spoken words comprise distinct sound units that merge when words are articulated (Learning Points Associates, 2004). Furthermore, it can be conceived as the proficiency in discerning and generating individual sounds within words, the act of segmenting words into their constituent sounds, amalgamating discrete sounds into words, and distinguishing words that share similar or dissimilar phonetic characteristics (Learning Point Associates, 2004). Colorado Reading First (2005) similarly postulates that phonemic awareness represents the capacity to manipulate sounds and an awareness of isolated sounds in oral language. Concurrently, the State of Victoria (2017) defines phonemic awareness as the precise ability to concentrate on and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) within spoken words, with its auditory nature excluding the involvement of written words. Drawing from this body of literature, phonemic awareness fundamentally revolves around recognizing the various sounds that constitute individual words. As a result, to establish a robust groundwork for literacy acquisition, educators should impart

phonemic awareness skills to their students, enabling them to eventually correlate the sounds they produce with written words and thereby acquire reading proficiency

2.3. Phonics

Phonics represents a pivotal component of reading literacy, entailing a focus on the association between letters and their corresponding sounds within written words (Learning Points Associates, 2004 & State of Victoria, 2017). It entails the acquisition of the alphabetic system, comprising letter-sound relationships, thereby facilitating children's comprehension of the interconnection between written language and the phonetic aspects of spoken language (State of Victoria, 2017 & Suganda, 2016). Moreover, effective phonics instruction equips children with the ability to employ these associations in reading and spelling words with precision and celerity (Learning Points Associates, 2004). Essentially, phonics instruction revolves around fostering letter-sound relationships within the context of spoken and written language. In that regard, it is imperative for educators to possess the knowledge and proficiency required to deliver effective phonics instruction, enabling learners to establish a connection between the letters in written language and the sounds of spoken words. In essence, teachers should enable learners to leverage their phonemic awareness as a foundational element for phonics instruction. Once learners have acquired proficiency in phonemic awareness and phonics, they can then proceed to the subsequent phase of reading development called fluency, which is discussed below.

2.4. Fluency

Fluency in reading entails the rapid and accurate recognition of words within a text, coupled with the utilisation of phrasing and emphasis to convey the text in a manner that closely resembles spoken language (Learning Point Associates, 2004). This definition aligns with the State of Victoria (2017), which characterises fluency as the ability to read swiftly and accurately, cultivated through guided oral reading exercises aimed at enhancing word recognition, as well as the speed and precision of oral comprehension during reading. During this phase of reading development, students become proficient at identifying words they may struggle to pronounce and autonomously deciphering their pronunciation. They also gain competence in reading simple narratives and feel at ease when encountering new concepts (N'Namdi, 2005).

It is worth noting that at this juncture in their reading journey, students begin to employ contextual cues, leveraging information within the text to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words or concepts. Therefore, to facilitate the development of fluent readers, educators should furnish ample opportunities for guided reading, employing modelling and scaffolding techniques in reading activities until students can independently exhibit fluency in their reading endeavours.

2.5. Vocabulary

Vocabulary constitutes another integral facet of literacy instruction and acquisition, encompassing the lexicon essential for effective communication with others (Learning Point Associates, 2004; State of Victoria, 2017). Learning Point Associates (2004) delineates vocabulary into four distinct categories: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with the initial two, listening and speaking

vocabularies, often amalgamated into oral vocabulary. Succinctly stated, vocabulary pertains to the words employed during interpersonal communication.

Of particular significance is oral vocabulary, as it serves as the cornerstone upon which written vocabulary is constructed, as succinctly conveyed by Learning Point Associates (2004): "Young readers use the pronunciations and meanings of words in their oral vocabulary to help them recognize words they see in print" (p. 22). In essence, this implies that as learners progress in their reading proficiency and attain fluency, they should concurrently develop the ability to comprehend the meanings of words encountered within the texts they read. This facet assumes paramount importance within the realm of reading comprehension, as the comprehension of words utilized in a text substantially contributes to the comprehension of the text as a whole, ultimately culminating in the overarching goal of reading comprehension. Further exploration of comprehension will be expounded upon in subsequent sections.

2.6. Comprehension

The final facet of reading instruction encompasses comprehension, representing the culmination of the various components of reading previously discussed. Comprehension, as defined by Learning Point Associates (2004), entails the construction of a coherent and accurate understanding by establishing connections between the content of the text and the reader's existing knowledge, involving a cognitive process of reflection upon the amalgamation of acquired information until it achieves lucidity. In alignment with this perspective, the State of Victoria, (2017) characterises comprehension as the aptitude to scrutinise the import of sentences and textual passages, an endeavour that necessitates the engagement of the cognitive faculties.

N'Namdi (2005) further contributes to this discourse by asserting that comprehension demands learners' proficiency in employing the language within the text to decipher and elucidate its meaning. Learners should be equipped with the skills to identify primary themes within the text, to dissect and apply the knowledge gleaned from the text, and to construct coherent arguments supported by textual evidence and supplementary sources or prior knowledge. Based on this revised exposition of comprehension, it is discernible that comprehension constitutes the ultimate objective of reading instruction, as reading fundamentally serves as a means to understand and grasp the content.

Furthermore, it is imperative to recognise that for comprehension to materialise, the reader must first harness prior knowledge in conjunction with incoming information to discern the current text's significance. Therefore, educators must guide their learners through the sequential stages of reading development, commencing with phonemic awareness, progressing through phonics, vocabulary, and fluency, culminating in comprehension. Only then can it be affirmed that a robust foundation for reading has been laid, paving the way for the subsequent phase of literacy teaching and learning, encompassing various pedagogical approaches.

2.7. Literacy teaching approaches

This section aims to expound upon several instructional approaches employed in the teaching of literacy across primary and secondary school settings, with a particular emphasis on high school-level literacy instruction. The forthcoming discussion will centre on distinct methodologies, including the phonics approach, whole word approach, whole language approach, balanced approach, extensive reading approach, guided reading approach, and language experience approach.

It is worth noting that the scope of this study is delineated to encompass functional literacy, a concept articulated by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2021). Functional literacy pertains to an individual's capacity to partake in activities wherein literacy skills are indispensable for the effective functioning of their respective social groups and communities. Furthermore, functional literacy equips individuals with the ability to persistently employ reading, writing, and mathematical skills for their own personal development and the betterment of their communities. In light of this contextualisation, the subsequent exploration of literacy teaching approaches will be conducted within the framework of functional literacy, thereby offering a comprehensive perspective on the strategies employed to foster effective literacy acquisition and application, particularly in high school settings.

2.7.1.   Phonics Approach

The phonics approach, which emphasises the association of individual letters in the alphabet with their corresponding English pronunciations, is a foundational method aimed at enabling children to independently read by decoding new words (Suganda, 2016). In alignment with this perspective, the State of Victoria (2017) underscores that phonics instruction facilitates children's comprehension of the connection between the letters in written language and the sounds of spoken language. Suganda (2016) further expounds that once learners grasp the sound-letter relationship, they can gradually blend letters together to construct simple words, expanding their proficiency over time. In essence, the phonics approach centres on the initial instruction of the alphabet's letters and their respective pronunciations, subsequently empowering learners to apply this knowledge in word formation. For instance, after mastering the pronunciation of the letters 'o' and 'n,' learners can assemble these phonemes to create words like 'no' and 'on.' This method proves efficacious in teaching reading since learners can employ their sound-letter comprehension to decode and generate new words.

However, despite its efficacy, the phonics approach is not devoid of shortcomings. Reyhner (2020) highlights that this approach places significant emphasis on students' capacity to read words based on their spelling. Nevertheless, the intricacies of the English language, characterised by an absence of a consistent one-to-one sound-symbol relationship, pose challenges, even at university level, particularly evident in the case of homonyms like 'to,' 'too,' and 'two.' Maddox and Feng (2013) further argue that the irregularities in English spelling render phonics instruction insufficient in facilitating children's word-reading proficiency. This brief examination of the phonics approach underscores its advantages and limitations in teaching reading.

Subsequently, considering that learners who have acquired phonemic awareness and phonics skills can begin constructing simple words, the subsequent literacy teaching approach is the whole word approach. This study aims to address these limitations by employing reading clubs to enhance literacy at the high school level, with a specific focus on reading for comprehension.

2.7.2. Whole Word Approach

The whole word approach to literacy instruction constitutes a complementary extension of the phonics approach. While phonics emphasises the acquisition of letter-sound relationships, the whole word approach seeks to teach children to recognise complete words from the outset. Marina (2016) provides further insight into this approach, commonly known as the 'look and say' method, wherein children are instructed to identify entire words or sentences as opposed to individual phonetic sounds. In this method, learners visually process a word as the teacher reads it aloud, subsequently repeating the word. The chief advantage of the whole word approach lies in its alleviation of the need for learners to deconstruct words into their constituent letters. Instead, learners focus on pronunciation and word recognition within the context of written text.

Nevertheless, this approach has garnered criticism for potentially fostering rote memorisation, as it remains uncertain whether learners genuinely recognise words as wholes or simply memorise their spelling (Suganda, 2016). To address this memorisation concern inherent to the whole word approach, the integration of reading clubs proves promising. Within the context of reading clubs, learners engage in a multifaceted reading experience, transcending the mere recognition of words. They cultivate the ability to establish connections between words encountered in a text and other words used within the same context. Moreover, they develop the capacity to infer word meanings based on the textual context. Hence, as learners actively participate in reading clubs, their literacy proficiency advances, concurrently enhancing their competence in reading for comprehension. This progression leads us to the subsequent approach, the whole language approach.

2.7.3. Whole Language Approach

The Whole Language Approach represents an integrated instructional method that views language holistically, encompassing the domains of writing, speaking, reading, and listening, as supported by several scholars (Reyhner, 2020; Trenbeath-Murray, 2016; Hassan, 2022; Huang, 2014; Moghadam & Adel, 2011). This pedagogical approach aims to cultivate children's reading abilities by illustrating how language operates as a comprehensive system for conveying meaning (Morin, 2021). In contrast to a singular focus on letter-sound relationships, the Whole Language Approach places paramount importance on the interpretation of textual content. It underscores the significance of acquiring language skills within a contextual framework, where learners engage with texts holistically, transcending the confines of individual letters, words, or sounds. Moghadam and Adel (2011) lend further support to this holistic approach, asserting that learners should participate in meaningful activities that facilitate language acquisition through communicative interaction.

While the Whole Language Approach offers substantial benefits, it also presents certain challenges. Notably, the omission of explicit instruction in fundamental elements such as letters,

letter sounds, and words can give rise to difficulties, including spelling and pronunciation issues among learners (Morin, 2021). The diminished emphasis on phonics within this approach may impede learners' capacity to navigate the intricacies of the English language, characterized by words that share similar sounds but possess divergent spellings and meanings. Moreover, the assumption that reading is an innate process akin to spoken language acquisition may overlook the reality that reading is a learned skill that necessitates systematic instruction (Miller, 2019).

However, despite these limitations, the Whole Language Approach can be complemented by interventions such as reading clubs, which serve to enhance reading comprehension and address the challenges faced by learners in this approach.

2.7.4. Balanced Literacy Approach

The Balanced Literacy Approach amalgamates elements from both the Whole Language and skills development paradigms, as supported by various scholars (Uzuner et al., 2011; Sianlys, 2013). This approach integrates an array of instructional methods encompassing phonics, spelling, writing, speaking, and reading, aiming to facilitate comprehensive language acquisition. By encompassing multiple teaching strategies within the curriculum, the Balanced Literacy Approach aims to cater to the diverse learning requirements of students, acknowledging their distinct learning styles and individual needs (Sianlys, 2013).

Nonetheless, the Balanced Literacy Approach is not without its constraints. Its effective implementation necessitates educators to possess proficiency in various instructional approaches, which can pose a considerable challenge (Sianlys, 2013). The incorporation of multiple teaching methodologies into the curriculum demands that teachers demonstrate competence in each of these approaches. Therefore, the Balanced Literacy Approach proves most effective when administered by educators well-versed in a spectrum of literacy teaching methods, enabling seamless integration.

To mitigate the limitations of the Balanced Literacy Approach, it can be judiciously combined with supplementary methodologies, such as reading clubs, to engender a more efficacious and multifaceted learning milieu.

2.7.5. Extensive Reading Approach

Extensive reading, as an instructional approach, entails the practice of reading numerous texts for the purposes of enjoyment and comprehension, as articulated by Charboneau (2016). This phase signifies a transition where learners, having achieved a certain level of reading proficiency, are now capable of reading for sheer pleasure. Within the realm of literacy instruction, extensive reading exposes learners to a diverse array of reading materials with the expectation that as they engage in this practice, they will acquire an enriched vocabulary and improved fluency, both of which are pivotal for enhancing reading comprehension.

Corroborating this perspective, Maipoka and Soontornwipast (2021) affirm that in English reading classes employing the extensive reading approach, the primary emphasis is often placed on encouraging students to immerse themselves extensively in reading graded readers or other

supplementary reading materials. This approach is particularly effective in fostering literacy development because it offers learners exposure to a wide spectrum of reading materials, thereby facilitating the acquisition of an expanded vocabulary, enhanced fluency, and the capacity to read for comprehension.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the effectiveness of the extensive reading approach is contingent upon the availability of functional libraries, which is not the case in Lesotho, the context of this study. According to the Ministry of Education and Training (2019) in Lesotho, out of the three hundred and fifty (350) secondary schools, only a hundred and twenty-one (121) possess operational libraries, while nineteen (19) have libraries rendered unusable due to books being stored but not utilised. Alarmingly, a hundred and ninety-four (194) schools lack libraries altogether. Thereupon, the implementation of the extensive reading approach in Lesotho's high schools is hindered by the absence of requisite library resources.

Nonetheless, this deficiency can be ameliorated through the establishment of reading clubs, as they do not solely rely on school-based resources. Reading club members can source reading materials from various outlets, including individual learners, community and national libraries, and book donations obtained from school book drives. Thus, reading clubs offer a pragmatic solution to bridge the resource gap, facilitating the effective implementation of the extensive reading approach within the unique context of Lesotho's high schools.

2.7.6. Guided Reading Approach

The Guided Reading Approach, introduced by Fountas and Pinnell in 1996, underscores the importance of small group instruction and differentiated teaching methods, as supported by several scholars (Schaffer & Schirmer, 2010; Pinnell & Fountas, 2013; Aessie et al., 2014-2015). This approach entails the grouping of learners according to their individual reading proficiencies and instructional levels (Pinnell & Fountas, 2013; Schaffer and Schirmer, 2010). Through the customisation of instruction to align with each learner's aptitude, educators aim to enhance language skills, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension (Schaffer & Schirmer, 2010). The core objective of the Guided Reading Approach is to provide learners with reading materials tailored to their skill levels, thereby facilitating their comprehension and fostering a genuine enjoyment of reading (Aessie et al., 2014-2015).

Nonetheless, the Guided Reading Approach can be time-intensive, especially within larger classroom settings, as teachers are required to individually assess each learner's instructional level and subsequently select suitable reading materials (Pinnell & Fountas, 2013; Schaffer & Schirmer, 2010). This approach demands meticulous observation and personalised attention, which may present challenges in overcrowded classrooms. To address these limitations and provide supplementary reading opportunities while preserving teaching time, the implementation of reading clubs can serve as an effective intervention. Reading clubs offer students additional avenues for reading practice and encourage discussions, ultimately enhancing reading comprehension skills without unduly encroaching on instructional time.

2.7.7. Language Experience Approach

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) serves as an instructional method that leverages students' oral compositions as fundamental materials for the development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, as supported by Huang (2013). LEA capitalises on students' existing oral language proficiencies and personal experiences, thus establishing a strong foundation for reading and writing competence (Huang, 2013). Through the integration of learners' authentic language and personal narratives, LEA engenders the creation of genuine stories, articulated in the students' own words and calibrated to their instructional levels (Huang, 2013).

Notwithstanding, the practical application of LEA can be time-intensive, particularly in large classrooms, as educators are obliged to meticulously observe and transcribe each student's narrative, resulting in a reduction of available teaching time (Zulkifli et al., 2019). The successful implementation of LEA hinges on teachers' profound comprehension of each learner's literacy level and unique experiences. Despite its merits, LEA alone cannot serve as the exclusive literacy teaching approach; it necessitates supplementation with complementary strategies. To mitigate this constraint, reading clubs can be deployed as an intervention to augment reading comprehension and provide learners with a platform to interact with diverse textual materials.

In conclusion, the array of literacy teaching approaches presents a multifaceted landscape, each replete with distinct advantages and limitations. Given the diversity in learners' needs and learning preferences, a comprehensive approach that integrates various strategies becomes imperative. Interventions like reading clubs emerge as vital tools to bridge gaps within literacy teaching approaches and enhance reading comprehension at the high school level. By combining different methodologies and affording additional reading opportunities, educators can create an enabling learning environment tailored to the diverse needs of all learners. On that account, this study strives to employ reading clubs as an intervention to elevate Reading for Comprehension and address the prevalent challenges associated with English Language, particularly in the Reading Comprehension Paper, within high school contexts.

2.7.8. Reading Clubs

According to Bikos (2015), reading clubs are informal groups comprising a few members, typically formed through individual or public initiatives (libraries, unions, universities, schools, etc.). These clubs are characterised by their members' self-commitment. These avid readers convene privately, publicly, or virtually to discuss the books they have read, as well as engage in activities outlined by their club guidelines.

In the school context, the South African Department of Basic Education (2018) defines a school reading club as an initiative coordinated by a reading champion (a teacher or volunteer) in a school. Such clubs conduct their literacy activities at the school, typically after regular hours, in a secure environment. Banaurs (2013) describes a reading club as a network of book enthusiasts who simultaneously read the same book and subsequently share ideas and emotions evoked by the reading. Members of these clubs regularly convene to analyse literary style, plot intricacies, and

character development. Notaras (2018) explains that reading clubs in schools are typically held once or twice a week, often in the morning before regular school hours.

In light of the definitions provided above, a reading club can be described as a social group united by a shared enthusiasm for reading and the desire to exchange their reading experiences. For the purposes of this study, and in alignment with Banaurs' (2013) definition of a reading club, the terms "reading club" and "book club" will be considered synonymous.

Common characteristics of reading clubs, as gleaned from the provided definitions, include: members gathering to read books and subsequently convening to discuss their reading experiences (Notaras, 2018; Street, 2004; Louhoungou, 2020; Banaurs, 2013); meetings can be physical, face-to-face, or virtual (Bikos, 2015; Alsayed, 2010) the primary objective is to promote reading (Elsayed, 2010; Banaurs, 2013; Stine et al., 2018; Dynia et al., 2015); in the case of school reading clubs, the facilitator is typically a teacher or librarian (Louhoungou, 2020; Morrow et al., 2017; Heikkilä & Tuisku; Banaurs, 2013); and, importantly, they foster a reading culture in an engaging and enjoyable manner (Notaras, 2018; Street, 2004; Dynia et al., 2016; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2017; South African Department of Basic Education, 2018; Alexander et al., 2011).

From the descriptions above, three key elements of reading clubs emerge, serving as the foundation of this study in relation to reading clubs: extensive reading, regular scheduled meetings, and the sharing, presenting, summarising, or discussion of the reading materials. These three pillars—extensive reading, regular meetings, and active engagement with reading materials—make reading clubs a pertinent intervention for improving reading comprehension at the high school level. This perspective aligns with the South African Department of Basic Education (2018), which suggests that reading clubs can serve as a foundational practice for developing reading comprehension skills essential for future academic success. Mataka (2015) concurs that consistent and persistent reading development is imperative for improving comprehension skills, and reading clubs provide an ideal platform for achieving this goal. Research Clue (2020) also posits that reading clubs play a pivotal role in enhancing students' reading abilities.

It is crucial to note that reading clubs offer a plethora of literacy activities that members can engage in, all of which contribute to the enhancement of their reading skills. These activities encompass quizzes, competitions, author or storyteller visits, excursions (Street, 2004); readings, debates, bibliographies, workshops, poetry marathons, book launches, contests, and exhibitions (Banaurs, 2013); as well as activities listed by the South African Department of Basic Education (2018), such as discussing the story, acting it out, anticipating the plot, discussing new words, drawing connections to the reader's life, and writing about aspects of the story.

While reading clubs have been employed globally both within and outside of classrooms, their fundamental objective has consistently been to promote reading, synonymous with literacy teaching and learning, as reading inherently leads to learning, whether consciously or subconsciously (Street, 2004; Louhoungou, 2020; Morrow et al., 2017).

2.7.8.1. Use of reading clubs and their impact on literacy teaching and learning in America

Reading clubs, often referred to as Summer Reading Clubs (SRCs), have gained popularity in America and are closely associated with major state libraries, such as the Columbus Metropolitan Library (Dynia et al., 2015). These SRCs, aptly named for their focus on preventing a phenomenon termed "summer slide," have a primary goal: mitigating the tendency for students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to experience a decline in academic achievement during the summer break (Beth, 2018 & Malsch, 2014).

Beth (2018) defines summer slide as the regression in students' academic achievements during the summer months, particularly affecting learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This phenomenon, as explained by NPC Malsch (2014), represents a disruption in school-based learning, detrimental to the retention and development of children's reading skills. Malsch (2014) further underscores that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are the most vulnerable to summer learning loss. In essence, Beth (2018) and Malsch (2014) emphasise that SRCs primarily aim to counteract the tendency of learners to forget what they have learned in school before the summer break, achieved through extensive summer reading.

Moreover, literature indicates that this loss particularly affects learners from disadvantaged backgrounds who may lack reading materials at home unless they participate in summer literacy interventions (Dynia et al., 2015). Malsch (2014) supports this notion by stating that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds experience a decline in reading achievement during the summer, while their peers from higher socio-economic backgrounds either maintain or improve their reading skills.

The significance of Summer Reading Clubs (SRCs) in enhancing literacy learning in America is underscored by Mid-Continent Public Library (MCPL), which collaborated with the Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium to conduct a study in 2012. The study gathered data from K-12 students in three districts during the spring of 2012 and the subsequent fall. The results indicated that SRCs had a positive impact on learners' literacy levels, particularly among those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Barrack, 2010).

The influence of Summer Reading Clubs (SRCs) on literacy learning is evident in the research conducted by Dynia et al. (2015). Their study demonstrated that participating children engaged in numerous literacy activities and achieved above-average results in decoding and comprehension. Furthermore, learners who planned to participate in SRCs appeared to make significant gains in reading comprehension over the summer. Similarly, Malsch (2014) affirms that summer reading clubs help compensate for the "break" in learning and yield positive reading achievement outcomes upon the return to school. A study on the Rutgers Reading Club conducted by Morrow et al. (2017) reported that after a 12-week intervention, many learners showed significant improvements in their scores. Furthermore, the collaborative study between Mid-Continent Public Library and the Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium revealed that Summer Reading Clubs positively impacted learners' reading levels, with learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds achieving

even greater gains than their counterparts from higher socio-economic backgrounds (Barrack, 2010).

As the literature demonstrates, reading clubs (RCs) have been effectively employed in America, where they have consistently shown a positive impact on literacy learning. Moreover, these clubs have also been successfully utilised in Europe, as discussed in the following section.

2.7.8.2. Reading cubs globally.
Reading clubs play a significant role in literacy enhancement not only in America and Europe but also in Asia. In the United Kingdom, Education Extra/ContinYou has been actively involved in developing and running reading club programs since the late 1990s, resulting in the establishment of 170 reading clubs through this initiative (Street, 2004). These clubs have proven highly effective in enhancing literacy, with both parents and teachers noting substantial progress among participating learners, particularly in reading skills and enthusiasm (Heikkilä & Tuisku, 2017). The positive impact is further substantiated by statistics, as 65% of children reported reading more due to the reading club, and 68% found reading easier than before. Parents' perspectives mirrored these improvements, with 71% affirming that their children displayed increased interest in reading and improved reading abilities. These clubs not only enhance reading skills but also instil a culture of reading.

Similarly, Asia has embraced reading clubs as a means to bolster literacy learning (Sinoya, 2016; Banaurs, 2013; Rifai et al., 2023). In Nepal's Kailai district, 102 reading clubs have emerged, proving their effectiveness (Sinoya, 2016). For instance, young reading club member Prem not only shares songs and stories he learns from the club but also expresses career aspirations, inspired by the stories he encounters. This demonstrates that reading clubs not only enhance literacy but also broaden horizons and career possibilities. Rifai et al. (2023) emphasize that reading clubs in Asia promote not only improved speaking and communication skills but also critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration among members. The reading enthusiasm and participation in reading challenges further underscore the positive impact of these clubs in fostering literacy learning (Banaurs, 2013).

The effectiveness of reading clubs in promoting literacy is evident across continents, from America and Europe to Asia, highlighting their potential as valuable tools for literacy enhancement. The subsequent discussion delves into the utilization and impact of reading clubs in North Africa.

2.7.8.3. Use of reading clubs and their impact on literacy teaching and learning in North Africa
There is literature suggesting that reading clubs have long been used, and are still used in North Africa to promote reading as well as to motivate people of all ages to contribute and exchange ideas (Elsayed, 2010 & Chaaban & Sawalhi, 2018;), even though they remain largely unresearched and unexamined in many Arab countries (Chaaban & Sawalhi, 2018). According to Elsayed (2010), discussing books in groups has a long history in the Arab world, beginning with literacy salons in Bagdad, Damascus, Cairo and other Arab literary capitals.

The use of reading clubs in North African countries was not just limited to the reading club meetings but it went further to reach out to the general public by organising different activities that engaged the surrounding community, including reading to older people, organizing conferences, and connecting with other book clubs (Chaaban & Sawalhi, 2018). Regarding the impact of reading clubs on participants' literacy levels, the participants reported that on an individual level, they were aware of the gains of reading as personal growth, learning, and satisfaction. Thus, in North Africa, just like in America, Europe and Asia, there were positive gains made from participation in reading clubs. Having looked at the use of reading clubs all over the word as well as North Africa, now the discussion comes down to West Africa, with particular focus on Senegal and Mali.

2.7.8.4. *Use of reading clubs and their impact on literacy teaching and learning in West Africa: Senegal & Mali*

Reading clubs in Senegal's Kealogou cluster intervention zone, supported by World Vision, have emerged as effective tools for literacy enhancement (Louhoungou, 2020). These clubs, numbering fifty-five, have received books catering to children of all ages, leading to unanimous agreement among stakeholders - parents, teachers, and school principals - that they have significantly contributed to improved academic performance, enhanced reading skills, and the cultivation of a reading culture among learners. The outbreak of Covid-19 forced schools to close temporarily, further underscoring the crucial role of reading clubs in sustaining literacy progress. In Senegal, World Vision volunteers went the extra mile by delivering books to reading club members at their homes, ensuring that the gains achieved before the pandemic were not lost (Louhoungou, 2020).

Mali has also harnessed the power of reading clubs for literacy improvement through World Vision's Unlock Literacy program, boasting a total of 42 such clubs (World Vision, 2018). This program focuses on enhancing primary school learners' reading skills by improving didactic methods within the classroom and engaging students, families, and communities in reading activities beyond school hours. Notably, the establishment of these reading clubs in Mali involves comprehensive training and equipping of facilitators with resource kits, alongside the organisation of weekly meetings, underscoring the clubs' significance and impact.

With these insights from West Africa, specifically Senegal and Mali, the discussion shifts to Southern Africa, with a particular focus on the Republic of South Africa, to explore the role and effectiveness of reading clubs in this region.

2.7.8.5. *Use of reading clubs and their impact on literacy teaching and learning in Southern Africa, represented by South Africa*

Reading clubs play a significant role in enhancing literacy in the Republic of South Africa, mirroring their prominence in America and Europe. Their establishment was initiated by the Department of Basic Education in 2013, underscoring their high regard (South African Department of Basic Education, 2018). In South Africa, their inception was influenced by recommendations from the Annual National Assessment (ANA) diagnostic report, which highlighted the poor performance of learners in the English Language, the primary medium of instruction (South

African Department of Basic Education, 2018). Accordingly, South African reading clubs were established with the specific aim of elevating learners' proficiency in English, the language of instruction. Importantly, the South African Department of Basic Education (2018) asserts that engagement in reading club activities serves as a platform for honing reading comprehension skills, ultimately contributing to academic success.

Furthermore, the Nal'ibali reading campaign stands out as one of the most extensive literacy initiatives in South Africa, having launched 13,300 reading clubs across all nine South African provinces and trained 42,000 individuals in the art of reading aloud with children (Huston, 2022). Nal'ibali is grounded in the belief that stories, whether oral or written, are equally pivotal in literacy development as the more technical aspects of language acquisition, such as phonics, spelling, and grammar. It argues that children immersed in well-crafted narratives build a rich repository of language, imagination, and vocabulary, thus fostering a heightened motivation to read (Edwards, 2013).

In summary, this brief review has illustrated how reading clubs are employed in South Africa to enhance literacy and underscores their esteemed status. The subsequent discussion delves into the prevalent utilisation of reading clubs in America, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

2.7.8.6. How reading clubs were used to improve literacy teaching and learning in America, Europe, Asia and Africa

To commence, it is notable that club members convened at predetermined dates and times, typically occurring once or twice weekly (Notaras, 2018; Morrow et al., 2017; Alexandra et al., 2011; Street, 2004). These gatherings made use of the pre-existing library resources (Notaras, 2018), thereby alleviating concerns regarding the dearth of reading materials, particularly for learners hailing from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds with limited access to such resources. Furthermore, each club designated a leader, typically an experienced educator in the case of school-based reading clubs (Banaurs, 2013; Heikkilä & Tuisku, 2017; Morrow et al., 2017; Alexandra et al., 2011; Louhoungou, 2020; Street, 2004). The presence of a teacher as a reading club facilitator conferred distinct advantages, as educators possess the requisite skills to engage with children. Additionally, in some instances, teachers were already familiar with these learners, thus possessing insight into their weaknesses and strategies to address them within the club setting (Heikkilä & Tuisku, 2017).

In the context of school-based reading clubs, it is essential to highlight that they operated within the confines of the school campus, typically on weekdays either before or after regular school hours, thus preserving instructional time (Notaras, 2018; Heikkilä & Tuisku, 2017; Morrow et al., 2017). Equally pivotal was the practice of permitting each learner to select their preferred book, fostering an environment where enjoyment of reading was paramount. This approach sought to nurture a reading culture amongst learners and ensure that the chosen reading materials aligned with the learners' proficiency levels (Notaras, 2018; Heikkilä & Tuisku, 2017; Morrow et al., 2017; Alexandra et al., 2011; Street, 2004; Ferrer & Staley, 2016; Elsayed, 2010).

Furthermore, the repertoire of club activities encompassed a wide array of options, including readings, book launches, debates, bibliographies, workshops, poetry marathons, contests, and exhibitions (Banaurs, 2013), as well as quizzes, competitions, visits by authors or storytellers, and educational excursions (Street, 2004). In the American context, select evaluative studies were conducted to gauge the impact of summer reading clubs on learners' literacy levels. These studies employed pre-tests and post-intervention assessments to determine the effectiveness of the clubs (Barrack, 2010; Street, 2004).

2.7.8.7. Why reading clubs are an alternative

Reading clubs offer a compelling alternative for enhancing literacy, supported by several key attributes. Firstly, they provide abundant guidance and assistance to individuals facing challenges. Jose and Raja (2011) argue that teachers within these clubs can help learners develop critical reading skills such as locating, evaluating, organising, and retaining information. Furthermore, reading clubs foster collaborative learning, with fellow members offering support (Ghodsi & Laal, 2012; Anyaogu, 2016; Sidgi, 2022).

A notable feature of reading club activities is their focus. Club members have clear weekly expectations and concentrate on achieving them. This focused approach enhances their ability to read with concentration, a skill beneficial for reading comprehension in the classroom (Jose & Raja, 2011; Pradani, 2021; Olasehinde et al., 2015; Arici, 2020; Zhou, 2011; Bojovic, 2010; Maala & Mkandawire, 2022).

Reading clubs offer a plethora of literacy activities exclusively in English, contributing to improved language proficiency. These activities, such as readings, book launches, debates, and contests (Banaurs, 2013; Dynia et al., 2015; Nkomo, 2021; Street, 2004), help learners gain fluency in English (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Additionally, these activities hone reading comprehension skills, including summarizing, critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Nurhayati & Fitriana, 2018; Khaki, 2014; Aliponga, 2013). The transfer of skills acquired in reading clubs to reading comprehension classes is well-established (Adeniji & Omale, 2010; Pradani, 2021; Nkomo, 2021; Whitten et al., 2016; Alexander et al., 2011).

Individualised attention and close monitoring by reading club facilitators are vital aspects of these clubs. Focused solely on literacy, facilitators can easily track individual progress and tailor assistance to specific needs, creating a conducive learning environment (Coristine et al., 2022; Adeniji & Omale, 2010; Aslan, 2010 & Morrow et al., 2017). This individualised approach facilitates students' success (Serin, 2022).

Reading clubs expose members to extensive reading, especially beneficial for those from low socio-economic backgrounds with limited access to reading materials (Nkomo, 2021; Olasehinde et al., 2015; Dynia et al., 2015; Malsch, 2014; Stine et al., 2018; Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015). These clubs address challenges such as the scarcity of textbooks, poor reading culture, and inadequate library resources in many schools (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015; Maala & Mkandawire, 2022; Stine et al., 2018; Makori & Onderi, 2014). Exposure to varied reading materials in reading

clubs promotes knowledge acquisition and overall improvement across the curriculum (Olasehinde et al., 2015; Palani, 2012 & Arici, 2020).

In reading clubs, learners have the freedom to select books they enjoy, fostering reading pleasure and cultivating a reading culture (International Literacy Association, 2019; Maala & Mkandawire, 2022; Notaras, 2018; Heikkilä & Tuisku, 2017 & Morrow et al., 2017). Enjoyment of reading is associated with improved literacy (Risbianto, 2018; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016 & Whitten et al., 2016).

The welcoming and non-judgmental learning environment in reading clubs encourages active participation and peer assistance (Anyaogu, 2016 & Ramos, 2022). A conducive learning environment promotes effective learning and educational attainment (Coristine et al., 2022 & Serin, 2022).

The equitable treatment of all club members by facilitators further supports optimal learning (Coristine et al., 2022 & Serin, 2022). Equal treatment fosters positive student-teacher relationships and ensures that each learner receives attention tailored to their needs.

Reading clubs provide extra time for learning and practice, addressing challenges like summer learning loss (Nkomo, 2021; Palani, 2012; International Literacy Association, 2019; Malsch 2014 & Morrow et al., 2017). Additionally, club members develop extensive vocabulary, enhancing their literacy performance (Jose & Raja, 2011; Risbianto, 2018; Andres, 2020; Pradani, 2021).

Crucially, numerous studies have substantiated the effectiveness of reading clubs in improving literacy, including gains in reading comprehension (Dynia et al., 2015), prevention of summer learning loss (Malsch, 2014), and overall reading achievement (Heikkilä & Tuisku, 2017; Morrow et al., 2017; Street, 2004). These findings underscore reading clubs as a viable alternative for literacy enhancement.

In conclusion, reading clubs offer a multifaceted alternative for enhancing literacy. They address various challenges in traditional educational settings, including limited resources, poor reading culture, and the need for individualized attention. The attributes of reading clubs, such as focused activities, exposure to extensive reading, and a conducive learning environment, contribute to improved literacy skills. Moreover, the documented effectiveness of reading clubs in research further reinforces their suitability as a means of literacy improvement.

2.8. Main traits which make the approach useful

Several characteristics of reading clubs render them a valuable alternative for enhancing literacy. Firstly, learning within these clubs is engaging and enjoyable (Notaras, 2018; Heikkilä & Tuisku, 2017 & Alexander et al., 2011), ensuring that the acquired knowledge is more likely to be retained. Secondly, reading club activities are scheduled outside of regular school hours (Notaras, 2018 & Morrow et al., 2017), preserving precious teaching and learning time within schools. Thirdly, the extracurricular nature of these clubs means that participants have more dedicated reading and learning time compared to those not involved in reading clubs (Malsch, 2014). The significance of

extra reading time is aptly summarised by Malsch (2014), emphasising, "Increasing the time that children spend reading is the most important strategy for improving literacy skills in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension" (pp. 4-5).

Additionally, reading clubs offer access to a wealth of reading resources that members might not have access to otherwise (Dynia et al., 2015; Malsch, 2014; Morrow et al., 2017). Collaborative learning is another pivotal attribute of reading clubs (Alexander et al., 2011; Maldonado, 2012; Rifai et al., 2023; Anyaogu, 2016; Ghodsi, 2012). Club participation fosters cooperation rather than competition, as learners work collectively to improve their literacy levels. These close relationships create a sense of community and solidarity that extends beyond the reading club.

Furthermore, the relaxed and welcoming learning environment within reading clubs makes learners feel comfortable and valued (South African Department of Basic Education, 2018 & Maldonado, 2012), instilling a sense of identity and belonging (Alexander et al., 2017 & Morrow et al., 2017). The discursive nature of reading clubs, where members engage in book discussions, enhances various reading skills, including presenting arguments, summarizing, vocabulary acquisition, critical thinking, and analysis skills (Grenier et al., 2022; Andres, 2020; Vu et al., 2021; Rifai, 2023; Ferrer & Staley, 2016).

The freedom for learners to choose their own reading materials (Ferrer & Staley, 2016 & Alexander, 2011) serves as a motivating factor, encouraging them to read, enjoy reading, and ultimately embrace a reading culture. Moreover, the individualised nature of reading within these clubs, where each learner selects books at their own reading level (Louhoungou, 2020; Street, 2004 & Elsayed, 2010), promotes a genuine love for reading, further nurturing the development of a reading culture.

Having explored the attributes of reading clubs that make them effective for literacy enhancement, the discussion now shifts to countries similar to Lesotho that have successfully employed reading clubs for this purpose.

2.9. Reviewed countries with similarities to Lesotho
Among the countries under review, South Africa closely resembles Lesotho due to their shared location in Southern Africa and their common use of English as the primary medium of instruction in schools (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009 & Spaull & Taylor, 2016). Additionally, both countries face a shortage of functional school libraries. In South Africa, out of 24,699 schools, only 1,903 have operational libraries, while in Lesotho, approximately 121 out of 350 high schools possess usable libraries where students can borrow and return books. Additionally, 19 schools have libraries that are not utilised due to space constraints, and 194 schools lack libraries altogether (Nassimbeni & Desmond, 2011; Ministry of Education and Training, 2019). Moreover, both nations encounter a shortage of qualified teachers (African Development Fund, 2007 & Taylor & Spaull, 2016).

Given these similarities and the endorsement of reading clubs by the Department of Basic Education in South Africa (South African Department of Basic Education, 2018), it is worthwhile

to consider implementing them in Lesotho to assess their effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension at the high school level. As previously mentioned, the motivation for this study arises from the unsatisfactory performance in reading comprehension at the high school level. The reviewed literature sheds light on some of the contributing factors, which are further discussed below.

2.10. Possible reasons for the prevailing poor performance in reading comprehension

The reviewed literature in this study highlights several factors contributing to poor performance in reading comprehension at the high school level. One prominent challenge is the inadequate teaching of reading comprehension strategies, as observed by Nurie (2017), who notes that strategy teaching receives insufficient attention during reading comprehension instruction. It appears that although teachers may seem to be teaching reading comprehension, closer scrutiny reveals a lack of effective comprehension instruction. Another related issue is the deficiency in teachers' pedagogic content knowledge (PCK) regarding certain English Language concepts (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016 & Maala & Mkandawire, 2022). Pedagogical content knowledge represents the fusion of pedagogy and subject content knowledge (Shing et al., 2015). These two challenges, inadequate teaching strategies and lack of PCK, collectively contribute to the persistently poor performance in reading comprehension in schools (Nurie, 2017; Haron et al., 2020; Gustav & Filip, 2020; Shing et al, 2015 & Anita & Andris, 2013).

Addressing these issues underscores the need for in-service training for English Language teachers (Ojukwu, 2013; Haron et al., 2020; Bateille & Evans, 2019). Another factor linked to poor performance is ineffective assessment, with Mulenga and Lubasi (2019) highlighting the significance of assessment in measuring learners' acquisition of essential skills, values, knowledge, and attitudes. Additionally, poor administration (Yariv, 2011) may contribute to educational challenges.

The abolishment of the Primary School Leaving (PSL) examination, allowing learners to transition to high school regardless of their readiness (Mukurunge & Tlali, 2018), is suggested as a potential factor for the subpar performance in reading comprehension, particularly in Lesotho. Mother tongue influence also plays a role, as some teachers use their native language randomly, not necessarily to explain complex concepts (Phindane, 2020 & Giang, 2022).

Poor lesson planning, leading to lessons lacking introductions, conclusions, or coherent development, is another factor identified in the literature (Ojukwu, 2013 & Moradi, 2019). Ayres (2014) emphasizes the importance of lesson planning in structuring lesson outcomes. Additionally, some teachers' habitual late arrivals (Mulenga & Lubasi, 2019) and delayed lesson commencement (Tarkar, 2020) contribute to syllabus coverage challenges and hinder effective teaching and learning.

The impact of Covid-19 on education from 2020 to 2022 has introduced further complications. The pandemic led to school closures as a precautionary measure (Tarkar, 2020; & Chhetri &

Pokhrel, 2021). Consequently, online learning became necessary for schools that could afford it, while those serving economically disadvantaged students faced interruptions in teaching and learning (Chhetri & Pokhrel, 2020).

To address these challenges, the literature offers potential solutions, including in-service training for English Language teachers, the implementation of reading clubs to enhance reading comprehension, and regular classroom observations to improve reading comprehension instruction (McNally, 2016 & Whitehurst, 2014), among others.

2.11.   Conclusion

The literature review presents compelling evidence supporting the effectiveness of reading clubs as a viable strategy for fostering literacy at the high school level, particularly in the context of reading comprehension. This study, therefore, aims to explore the implementation of reading clubs as an intervention to enhance reading comprehension among high school students in Lesotho. This research is motivated by the pressing issue of significantly low literacy levels in Lesotho, as highlighted in the study's background.

3. CHAPTER THREE:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1.Introduction

Chapter 2 offered insights into various literacy teaching approaches, delineating their strengths and weaknesses, thereby highlighting the necessity of the reading club intervention to enhance reading comprehension at the high school level. The chapter also highlighted the global use of reading clubs for literacy improvement, underscored their effectiveness, and stressed their applicability in Lesotho to bolster reading for comprehension at the high school level.

This chapter establishes the theoretical foundation upon which the study is grounded. It investigates into the study's guiding theory, its underlying principles, and the rationale for their suitability in this research.

The study is firmly rooted in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Panhwar et al., 2016; Cherry, 2022 & Abtahi et al., 2017), which places a strong emphasis on the role of social interaction and culture in shaping higher-order thinking skills (Allman, 2023). Vygotsky posited that social interaction plays a pivotal role in cognitive development, particularly in the cultivation of higher-order thinking abilities (Allman, 2023). Additionally, this theory is grounded in the belief that learners actively participate in the co-creation of knowledge through their interactions within both social and individual realms (Panhwar et al., 2016). Cherry (2022) concurs, emphasising that sociocultural theory highlights the notion that learning is fundamentally rooted in interpersonal interactions, with information being subsequently internalised at the individual level. Abtahi et al. (2017) further assert that, according to sociocultural theory, learning is a product of social interactions with both human and non-human elements. Of particular significance is Vygotsky's (1978) contention that every function in a child's cultural development occurs twice: first, on a social level, and later, on an individual level; initially between individuals (interpsychological), and subsequently within the child (intrapsychological). Vygotsky posited that this principle applies equally to voluntary attention, logical memory, and the formation of higher-order thinking processes.

In light of the aforementioned literature, two fundamental aspects of sociocultural theory and learning emerge. First, learning commences in the presence of others; learners initially acquire knowledge through interactions within social settings, such as communities, villages, or schools. This initial learning from others serves as the foundation upon which new knowledge can be absorbed and internalised, available for future utilisation or expansion. Second, learning is an interactive process. Thus, for learning to transpire, some form of interaction with other individuals, especially those possessing more knowledge or expertise, is imperative. In accordance with Cherry (2022), sociocultural theory posits that learners' cognitive development is substantially guided by individuals in their lives who assume mentorship roles, such as parents or teachers.

Sociocultural theory has been chosen as the guiding framework for this study due to its principles, which closely align with the research objectives. These principles encompass social interactions,

the concept of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), collaborative learning, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and the role of language as a semiotic tool. These principles are interconnected, making it challenging to discuss one without reference to the others. However, the subsequent discussion provides a more comprehensive elucidation of each principle, commencing with social interactions.

3.2. Social interactions

One of the central tenets of sociocultural theory is the significance of social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978; Allman, 2023; Cherry, 2022; Panhwar et al., 2016; Abtahi et al., 2017; Turuk, 2008; Powell & Kalina, 2009 & Amine & Asl, 2015). According to this theory, social interactions play a pivotal role in cognitive development, particularly in the cultivation of higher-order thinking processes (Allman, 2023). Cherry (2022) similarly asserts that sociocultural theory posits that learning transpires during conversations and interactions with others. Likewise, Panhwar et al. (2016) suggest that sociocultural theory holds that learners actively co-create knowledge through interactions that span both the social and internal domains. Furthermore, Abtahi et al. (2017) argue that, according to sociocultural theory, learning is an outcome of social interactions with both human and non-human elements. This concise exploration of pertinent literature underscores the central importance of social interactions within sociocultural theory, rendering it a fitting framework for guiding this study. Importantly, these interactions are at the core of reading club (RC) activities, further affirming the appropriateness of sociocultural theory as the guiding framework.

The emphasis placed on social interactions within sociocultural theory aligns seamlessly with this study's focus on reading clubs, where the primary activity involves club members selecting and reading books, subsequently returning on scheduled days to present their readings and engage in discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and responses to their peers. These activities are emblematic of rich interactions among club members, reinforcing sociocultural theory as the most apt theoretical lens for this study. This advantage of sociocultural theory aligns with one of the key objectives of this study: to facilitate language improvement and comprehension skills among RC participants, which they can subsequently apply in their reading comprehension classes to achieve enhanced academic outcomes.

Another core principle of sociocultural theory employed in this study is the concept of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). The ensuing discussion provides a more comprehensive elaboration of this principle.

3.3. More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

The concept of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), as construed by McLeod (2019), pertains to an individual possessing a superior understanding or higher proficiency level than the learner concerning a specific task, process, or concept. Furthermore, Abtahi et al. (2017) emphasise that learning originates from social interactions in the company of individuals who possess greater knowledge. Essentially, in accordance with sociocultural theory, any form of learning necessitates a social interaction between a novice and an expert, a learner and a teacher, a child and a parent,

or a professional and an amateur. This interaction enables those with less knowledge to acquire knowledge from those who are more knowledgeable. This concept of the MKO holds relevance for this study, as teachers or leaders within reading clubs, as well as more knowledgeable peers in the club, will serve as MKOs responsible for guiding and assisting club members in their reading club activities. As these interactions occur and participants progress, their cognitive skills, linguistic abilities, and reading comprehension will improve, thus aligning with the study's objective of enhancing reading comprehension at the high school level.

It is imperative to bear in mind that the role of the MKO is dynamic, contingent upon who possesses greater knowledge at a given moment. For instance, an Information Technology (IT) learner can function as the MKO when guiding a Religious Studies teacher unfamiliar with using Google Drive on how to upload and retrieve files. In concurrence, Abtahi et al. (2017) expound that the position of the MKO is not confined solely to adults or figures of authority; instead, it can alternate between a child and an adult or between children, making participants mutually teachers and learners. Another fundamental tenet of sociocultural theory that renders it suitable for guiding this study is collaborative learning, as expounded in the following discussion.

3.4.Collaborative learning

One fundamental concept within sociocultural theory is collaborative learning, which is supported by Panhwar et. al. (2016). They assert that for language learning, both student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions are central, aligning with the Vygotskian model of teaching, which advocates interactive and collaborative learning while rejecting teacher-centred instruction. Turuk (2008) likewise contends that sociocultural theory underscores the importance of collaboration during instruction, as it helps learners comprehend the significance of interactions within a social instructional network for individual cognitive and linguistic development. Cherry (2022) reiterates this idea by emphasising the creation of a collaborative learning environment as a means to implement sociocultural theory in the classroom. From this brief review of sociocultural theory and collaborative learning, two key concepts emerge: collaboration and interactions. The theory emphasises that learners should work together and interact with each other as they acquire new knowledge from their peers and the surrounding environment. As previously mentioned, the theory posits that learning occurs in the presence of others who possess greater knowledge, and the collaborative aspect involves learners actively engaging and collaborating with others, taking ownership of their own learning.

It is this collaborative aspect of sociocultural learning that makes it a suitable framework for guiding this study. Reading club activities promote collaborative learning among club members rather than fostering competition. For instance, activities such as debates require teamwork and collaboration among team members. Even simple book reviews or presentations on what club members have read encourage collaboration. As members from the audience pose questions to those presenting, they collectively contribute to the analysis of the book, delving beyond its surface meaning to explore its significance to the readers or presenters. In this collaborative process, presenters and audience members work together to develop a shared understanding of the authors'

messages in the books reviewed within the reading clubs. Through these collaborative interactions, club members acquire numerous relevant comprehension skills, including but not limited to reading with understanding, fluency, summarisation, asking and answering questions, synthesis, analysis, and critical thinking, all without the need for explicit instruction. This approach aligns with the sociocultural theory's principle of students taking charge of their own learning, as advocated by the theory.

Another closely related principle within sociocultural theory that is pertinent to this study is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Subsequent discussions will delve into this concept.

3.5. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as defined by Vygotsky (1978), represents the gap between a learner's actual development level, determined by independent problem-solving, and the potential development level, achieved through problem-solving with adult guidance or collaboration with more capable peers. McLeod (2019) further elaborates that the ZPD refers to the difference between what a learner can accomplish without assistance and what they can achieve with guidance and support from a knowledgeable partner. The term "proximal" indicates the skills a learner is on the verge of mastering. In essence, the ZPD encompasses tasks that a child cannot yet perform independently but can with assistance from a more knowledgeable individual. This assistance typically comes from the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO).

To elucidate the concept of ZPD, it can be understood as a range of activities that a child cannot perform alone but can accomplish with the guidance and support of someone possessing greater knowledge in the subject under study. These actions are just beyond the child's current cognitive level or ability, and they require the assistance of the MKO to bridge the gap.

Moreover, Zaretsky (2021) introduces the idea of two additional developmental levels that bound the ZPD: the actual level of development and the unattainable level of development. Within the ZPD, children, in collaboration with adults, can tackle challenges they cannot manage alone, leveraging this assisted learning experience to enhance their cognitive capabilities. This collaborative interaction with adults contributes to learners' cognitive development.

However, it is essential for teachers to carefully scaffold activities within the ZPD, ensuring that they neither overwhelm nor make them too easy for the learners. The appropriate level of challenge encourages growth without causing frustration or helplessness among students. Assessing students' current skill levels and tailoring instruction to match their cognitive abilities, as recommended by Cherry (2022), is crucial in classroom settings.

The actual level of development refers to tasks that learners can independently perform without external assistance, representing their comfort zone. The ZPD serves as a bridge from this level to their potential development, where they can acquire new skills and knowledge with support from the MKO.

Conversely, the unattainable level of development marks the boundary where children struggle to interact with the MKO and comprehend the tasks, leading to feelings of inadequacy and helplessness (Zaretsky & Kholmogorova, 2020). Operating within this level can be demoralising for learners.

Recognising the importance of these distinct developmental levels and understanding how to support learners at each stage is crucial for effective teaching and learning. Sociocultural theory has been chosen to guide this study due to its clear delineation of these developmental levels and recommendations for assisting learners at each stage.

The sociocultural theory aligns well with the operation of reading clubs (RCs). For instance, RC members have the freedom to choose books suited to their individual reading levels, which also serves as a diagnostic assessment for teachers to gauge language proficiency and reading skills. Additionally, members have the autonomy to read and present summaries of books according to their comprehension levels, enabling teachers to identify areas where assistance is required without undermining the students' confidence.

Moreover, as RC participants engage in club activities and share their readings, those who listen and observe can acquire valuable comprehension skills that can be applied effectively when responding to reading comprehension questions. This aligns with Cherry's (2022) argument that as children are allowed to stretch their skills by observing those slightly more advanced than them, they can progressively extend their ZPD.

In light of these reasons, sociocultural theory has been selected to underpin this study. Another important principle of sociocultural theory, mediation, particularly the use of language as a semiotic tool, will be discussed in the subsequent section, as it is a key aspect of mediation employed in this study.

3.6. Mediation and mediation tools

Another crucial principle of sociocultural theory is mediation, as described by Hasan (2002). This process is inherently transitive, necessitating at least two participants, where something or someone mediates something. Building upon this concept, Vygotsky extended his reasoning to propose that human action, both at the social and individual levels, is mediated by tools and signs, also known as semiotics. This semiotics include language, counting systems, conventional signs, works of art, and more, as argued by Allman (2023). According to Vygotsky (1978), the use of these tools, known as semiotic mediation, facilitates the co-construction of knowledge and mediates social and individual functioning.

In essence, sociocultural theory emphasises the use of tools, particularly semiotic tools, with language as the primary modality, to enhance learning. According to this theory, language stands out as one of the most pivotal tools for learners' cognitive development. McLeod (2014) supports this perspective, asserting that language is potentially the most powerful tool available to us. It serves as a form of symbolic mediation that plays two critical roles in development: facilitating

communication with others and constructing meaning. For the purposes of this study, we will focus specifically on language as a semiotic tool.

3.7. Language as a semiotic tool

Language, as a semiotic tool, holds a central role, as highlighted by several scholars (Hasan, 2002; Hasan, 2001; Turuk, 2008 & Allman, 2023). Allman (2023) expounds that according to sociocultural theory, language serves the purpose of assigning meaning during social interactions, facilitating communication within social contexts. Additionally, Hasan (2001) emphasises that semiotic mediation, as a natural function of language in discourse, enables individuals to internalise their experiences and the world they encounter in their lives.

Furthermore, Chaney (1990) underscores the importance of recognising language as a social activity within the learning environment. This recognition encourages students to engage in dialogue, exchange information, discuss ideas, collaborate on writing, seek assistance from peers, and participate in problem-solving. In the context of a school, language emerges as a powerful tool through which teaching and learning are conducted.

The emphasis placed on language by sociocultural theory aligns seamlessly with the objectives of this study, which seeks to enhance language teaching and learning by investigating the effectiveness of reading clubs in improving reading comprehension at the high school level. Within these reading clubs, students will actively employ language for purposes such as discussion, reading, idea-sharing, and more, making sociocultural theory a highly suitable framework for this study.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief review of sociocultural theory, its core guiding principles and how the theory has proven suitable for use in guiding this study investigating the effectiveness of reading clubs as intervention towards reading for comprehension at high school level.

4. CHAPTER FOUR:

METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter offers a thorough and systematic explanation of the methodology utilised throughout the study. It encompasses various crucial components, including the research design, characteristics of the population and sample, steps taken to ensure the study's validity, and the methods employed for data collection. By investigating into these essential elements, readers can grasp a clear understanding of the strong framework that forms the basis of the entire research effort. This detailed examination of the study's methodology establishes a sturdy groundwork on which the subsequent analysis and findings can confidently rely.

4.2. Interpretive paradigm

This study adopts an interpretive paradigm and utilises an action research case study approach within high school reading clubs to enhance reading comprehension. The interpretive paradigm, as outlined by Tekin and Kotaman (2013), prioritises understanding the meaning behind social interactions. It underscores an interactive process wherein researchers and subjects engage in dialogue, questioning, active listening, reading, writing, and recording research data. Given that the interactions among club members serve as the primary mode of communication and implementation for interventions, the interpretive paradigm was deemed the most suitable framework. Moreover, this paradigm aligns with the study's context, which involves an examination of the effectiveness of reading clubs within a natural school setting.

The nature of this study, being an action research case study, inherently involves diverse contextual factors, necessitating a paradigm that can accommodate such variability. As highlighted by Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), interpretivism acknowledges differences in cultures, circumstances, and temporal contexts, leading to the creation of distinct social realities. Scotland (2012), Habib (2021), and Dawadi et al. (2020) also emphasise the subjective nature of the interpretive paradigm, where reality is individually constructed, and multiple realities coexist. This body of literature supports the study's alignment with the interpretive paradigm.

Additionally, the interpretive paradigm's subjective nature allows for tailored approaches to each case based on its unique context, a crucial aspect of this study's design. As observed by Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), the interpretive paradigm empowers researchers to treat each research context as unique, considering the specific circumstances at hand. In summary, the choice of the interpretive paradigm was made due to its facilitation of the study's focus on social interactions within reading clubs, its ability to accommodate diverse contextual factors, and its support for the investigation of unique, case-specific contexts within a natural school setting. As already indicated that the interpretive paradigm acknowledges the fact that there are differences in cultures, circumstances, and temporal contexts, leading to the creation of distinct social realities

(Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020), this necessitated the use of a methodology that would cater for this aspect of the study, which is qualitative research, and the discussion that ensues sheds more light on that.

4.3. Research Approach
4.3.1. Qualitative research

As indicated by Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), qualitative research is oriented towards providing a detailed understanding of a phenomenon, prioritising insights from individuals experiencing it rather than focusing on broad generalisations. Dawadi et al. (2020) affirm that qualitative researchers utilise methodologies such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation to grasp the intricacies of a situation and illuminate indicative findings. Haradhan (2018) argues that qualitative research aims to comprehend social phenomena from the viewpoint of those directly involved, rather than attempting to explain them externally. Medzana (2021) also highlights that qualitative research seeks understanding by exploring individuals' experiences and the nuanced details of their lived encounters.

Additionally, Haradhan (2018) underscores that qualitative research is inherently explanatory, aiming to elucidate 'how' and 'why' a specific social phenomenon or program operates in a particular manner. This body of literature underscores that qualitative research is primarily concerned with comprehending a phenomenon through the perspectives of the involved participants, with the researcher's objective being to glean insights directly from them.

Furthermore, qualitative research places emphasis on human insights, achieved through in-depth and selective case sampling, data triangulation, analysis of human-created artifacts and texts, and the researcher's deep immersion in the subject matter (Hai-Jew, 2015). Qualitative data is primarily generated, collected, and analysed through narratives and open-ended observations, employing methodologies such as interviews, focus groups, or ethnographies (Cresswell, 2009; Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Essentially, qualitative studies are focused on comprehending the research problem by directly engaging with involved individuals, resulting in a descriptive nature that relies more on textual and narrative data than numerical information.

Moreover, qualitative research employs purposive sampling as its aim is to understand the research problem from the perspective of those experiencing it. Additionally, qualitative studies utilise various data generation tools to explore multiple facets of the same phenomenon, thereby ensuring the rigor and trustworthiness of the research findings. Since the purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of reading clubs as intervention to improve reading for comprehension, it was imperative that some elements of quantitative research be used in order to quantify some of the findings (Tulli, 2010). More on quantitative research is elaborated in the subsequent discussion.

4.3.2. Quantitative research

Quantitative research involves the analysis of data that are either numerical or can be converted into numerical formats, as highlighted by Sheard (2018), Tulli (2010), Alharahsheh & Pius (2020), Apuke (2017), and Haradhan (2020). Its primary focus revolves around hypothesis testing, exploring cause-and-effect relationships, and predicting outcomes, as emphasised by Apuke (2017). The methodology in quantitative research aims to quantify social phenomena and concentrates on establishing connections among a limited set of attributes across a broad spectrum of cases, according to Tulli (2010). Consequently, quantitative studies predominantly deal with measurable data, probing into correlational studies or causal relationships.

In contrast to qualitative research, which seeks a profound understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, quantitative studies prioritise breadth, focusing on a few variables across a large number of cases. Moreover, while qualitative research adopts an interpretive approach, quantitative research adheres to a "strictly positivist, objective, scientific, and experimental" standpoint (Haradhan, 2020, p.51). This stance aligns with Scotland (2012), who characterises positivist epistemology as centred on objectivism, where positivists strive impartially to attain absolute knowledge about an objective reality. Similarly, Dawadi et al. (2020) assert that positivism follows an objective path in research, advocating for the acquisition of knowledge through the collection of objectively verifiable facts using quantifiable means.

Therefore, quantitative studies primarily focus on factual information that can be validated through quantifiable methods, often employing experimental designs or hypothesis testing to achieve their research objectives. As already indicated above that this study was investigating the effectiveness of reading clubs as intervention towards improving reading for comprehension, it was imperative that both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of research be utilised as the data generated needed to be analysed using both descriptive and numerical methods (Bell, 2007) hence the need for adopting mixed methods or quali-quantitative research. More on mixed methods (quali-quantitative research is explained below.

4.3.3. Mixed methods (Quali-quantitative research)

Quali-quantitative research, expounded by Bell (2007), represents an approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative techniques, placing a greater emphasis on qualitative methods. In this research paradigm, qualitative inquiries serve as the initial step to comprehend the focal subject, followed by the utilisation of quantifiable instruments during the investigative phase (Belisiario, 2021). In the context of this study, qualitative methodologies have been employed for descriptive and interpretative purposes, while quantitative methods have been utilised to analyse statistical data. The adoption of a dual-method approach was considered essential for this study since no single method alone could adequately permeate into the depth required to investigate the research phenomenon.

This reasoning is supported by Dawadi et al. (2020), who argue that "combining two methods can yield superior insights into research phenomena that cannot be fully elucidated using either qualitative or quantitative methods in isolation" (p. 27). Tenny et al. (2022) acknowledge that while qualitative and quantitative approaches differ, they are not mutually exclusive; qualitative research can enhance and deepen the understanding of data or results obtained through quantitative analysis. Similarly, White (2018) affirms that "both research methodologies possess distinct strengths, and the concurrent use of both methods bolsters the research outcomes" (p. 32).

The significance of employing both qualitative and quantitative methods is further emphasized by Kaplan (2015), who asserts that mixed methods studies offer the advantage of acknowledging the value of quantifiable and non-quantifiable aspects, thereby providing richer insights into the phenomenon of interest. It is on these grounds that a quali-quantitative approach was selected for this study, as it aligns most fittingly with the research objectives and the complexity of the subject under investigation.

4.4. Case study

As previously indicated, this study employed an action research case study approach to assess the efficacy of reading clubs as an intervention strategy targeting the enhancement of reading comprehension skills among high school students. Case studies serve as a research inquiry strategy wherein the researcher conducts a comprehensive exploration of a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Rouse, 2016; Cresswell, 2009; Lufungulo et al., 2021; Nwafor et al., 2012; Akyurek & Afacan, 2018). Additionally, Quintao et al. (2020) argue that the primary aim of a case study is to conduct an in-depth examination of one or a few specific cases. Quintao et al. (2020) note that case studies enable a profound understanding of a phenomenon by gathering data from the perspectives of multiple individuals, unveiling new phenomena through participant interactions. Essentially, case studies empower researchers to engage deeply into the fundamental issues under investigation, employing diverse methods of data collection.

Moreover, the strength of case studies lies in their ability to foster interactions between the researcher and research participants, enabling the researcher to directly learn from the participants rather than relying on assumptions. It was precisely these strengths inherent in the case study methodology that motivated its utilisation in this study. The objective was to gather insights from both English as a Second Language teachers and their students concerning the factors contributing to poor performance in English Language within their schools, rather than basing conclusions on unsubstantiated assumptions. Subsequently, this knowledge was applied to implement the intervention.

4.5. Action research

This research constituted an action research case study that aimed to evaluate the efficacy of reading clubs as an intervention for enhancing high school students' reading comprehension skills. Haradhan (2018) defines action research as a systematic investigation conducted by educators and

educational personnel to collect and analyse data informing and improving instructional practices. Similarly, Lufungulo et al. (2021) highlight its capacity to enhance teachers' and administrators' practices, making it a favoured approach for addressing educational challenges. They note that action research often leads to actionable changes in students, teachers, administrators, or educational policies. In this study, the intervention primarily targeted learners actively engaged in reading clubs to improve their reading comprehension.

The importance of action research in education is emphasised by Tekin and Kotaman (2013), who highlight its flexibility, adaptability, richness, openness, dynamism, context-specificity, and participatory nature, contributing to a deeper understanding of investigated phenomena. Its alignment with the educational environment makes it suitable for addressing pedagogical and learning-related challenges. Thus, the choice of action research was made for this study, allowing direct engagement with schools, listening to teachers and students, observing their actions, implementing the intervention, and assessing its impact first-hand.

Significantly, this study followed the action research cycle meticulously. It involved planning the intervention type before implementation, assessing its effectiveness, and reflecting on its success or failure. For instance, the research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of reading clubs in enhancing reading comprehension at the high school level and followed all four cycles of the action research model. Initially, the study identified reading comprehension challenges from learners' Pre-test scripts. Subsequently, the intervention, introducing reading club activities, was implemented in one school. However, during monitoring and evaluation, it was observed that learner engagement and interest were low. Upon reflection, it was realised that learners' disengagement was due to teachers selecting reading materials that did not align with students' interests. Adjusting the approach by allowing learners to choose their reading materials resulted in increased interest and engagement in club activities. The action research cycles (planning, acting, observing, and reflecting) were instrumental in guiding the implementation of the intervention.
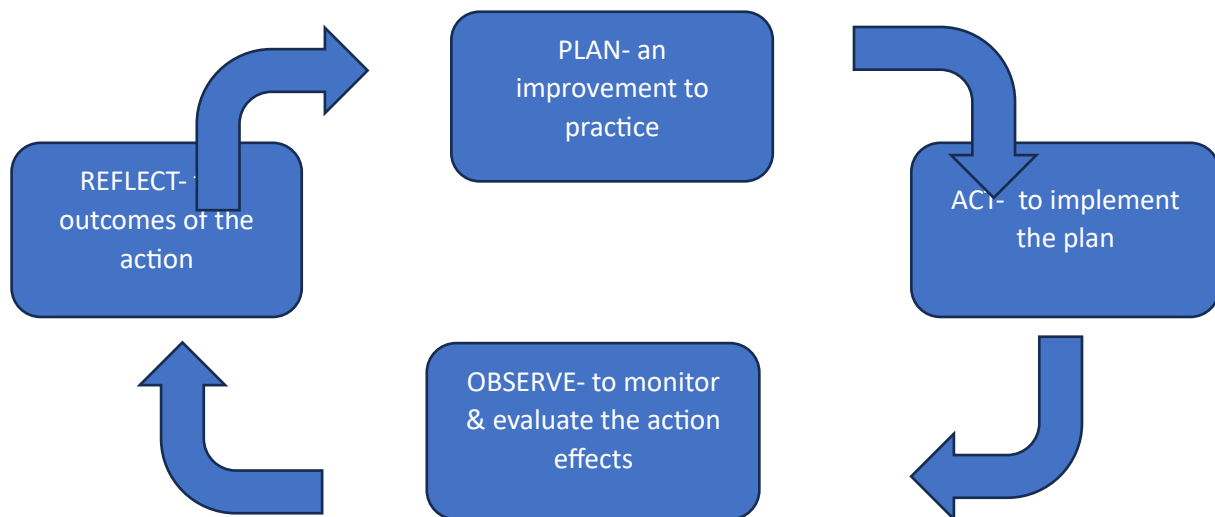
This study implemented three action research phases: the diagnostic phase, transformative phase, and evaluative phase. The diagnostic phase is the initial stage where problems or issues are identified (Stages in Action Research, 2018). Identification can be achieved through interviews, reviewing organisational records, among other methods (Pinkewycz, 2012). The transformative phase involves implementing measures to address identified issues (Bedford, 2022). It's the stage where concerned parties collaborate in executing the action plan or intervention (Zentis, 2015). Reflection becomes crucial here, involving monitoring the intervention's progress, assessing its success or failure, and making necessary adjustments if the expected results are not met.

The evaluative phase assesses the plan's effectiveness and implements required modifications (Pinkewycz, 2012 & Stages in Action Research, 2018). If desired changes are not achieved, adjustments are made, and the cycle of planning, acting, observing, and evaluating restarts until the desired outcome is attained (Stages in Action Research, 2018). Pardede (2018) outlines these phases, emphasising problem identification, finding solutions, implementation, observation, and assessment of success in action research. It's acknowledged that modification is essential during implementation if needed, ensuring the achievement of the desired outcome (Pardede, 2018).

In this study, as mentioned earlier, problem identification was initiated through a Pre-test for participating learners to evaluate any reading comprehension challenges from their assessed work. For that reason, the three action research phases were followed. Additionally, classroom observations provided insight into learners' Pre-test performance in Reading Comprehension teaching methodologies. Interviews were conducted with teachers and learners to identify reasons behind poor Reading Comprehension performance in schools. Lastly, the study utilised a reflective journal to record enlightening observations from interviews and classroom observations. The fact that this study was an intervention called for a need to clearly define intervention and what it entails, and more on that is discussed below.

4.6. Intervention

Lufungulo et al. (2021) underscore that action research frequently results in actionable changes, encompassing interventions targeted towards students, teachers, administrators, or educational policies. Guided by this perspective and driven by the concern over learners' inadequate performance in the Pre-test, the reading club intervention was introduced with the goal of enhancing reading comprehension at the high school level. Fraser and Galinsky (2010) define an intervention as a deliberately implemented strategy for change, aligning with the purpose behind the reading club initiative, aimed at improving students' reading comprehension performance.

4.7. Research site

The initial selection of three schools for this study was based on their accessibility to the researcher. Two of these schools are located within the town where the researcher is employed,

while the third school is situated outside the town but closer to the researcher's residence, making visits to these schools economically feasible. Gajaweera and Johnson (2015) emphasise the significance of choosing a research site that is easily accessible to the researcher, supporting the rationale behind this selection.

Moreover, the chosen schools were specifically targeted because they had English Language teachers and learners, and consistently exhibited unsatisfactory results in the Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) English Language assessments.

4.8. Population and sample

McLeod (2019) defines target population as the complete set of individuals from which a sample can be drawn. Sample, on the other hand, represents the participants involved in the research inquiry, (McLeod, 2019), and is a smaller subset of the population studied to comprehend the overall characteristics of the larger group, according to Thomas (2023).

In this study, the population comprised English Language teachers instructing Grades 9 and 10, along with the learners in those grades. Initially, the intended sample was four English Language teachers per school (three schools were initially included), each with four Grade 9 and 10 learners, totalling 12 teachers and 48 learners. However, due to unforeseen circumstances in the schools, the final sample consisted of nine teachers and 36 learners, distributed unevenly among the schools.

Unfortunately, two schools were unable to implement the reading club intervention and withdrew from the study. Consequently, though all three schools initially participated in interviews and classroom observations, only one school executed the intervention. Following the dropout of the two schools, the sample included four teachers and 28 Grade 10 learners from the remaining school.

4.9. Sampling technique

Purposive sampling was employed to select the population and sample, aligning with the study's context and purpose, as advocated by Palinkas et al. (2015). This method involves the researcher intentionally selecting participants or elements relevant to the study's objectives. For this investigation, focusing on the use of reading clubs as an intervention to enhance reading comprehension at the high school level, both English Language teachers and learners were chosen purposively as the study's population and sample.

With the population, sample, and sampling procedures discussed, the subsequent section addresses issues related to positionality.

4.10. Positionality

Positionality, often used interchangeably with "identity," pertains to a researcher's self-perception and how they are perceived by research participants in fieldwork accounts (Chereni, 2014). This encompasses the shaping of identities by perceptions, both in terms of how others view the researcher and how the researcher anticipates being viewed (Bourke, 2014; Ozano & Khatri, 2018). It involves whether the researcher is seen as an outsider or insider, holds power or feels powerless, or hails from a privileged or disadvantaged background. Chereni (2014) notes that while researchers position themselves, they are also positioned by participants. Overall, positionality in research focuses on how researchers perceive themselves within the research process and how participants receive them. Crucially, this identity, whether assumed or attributed, can influence the research process and subsequent findings.

The impact of researchers' and participants' identities on the research process is stressed by Bourke (2014) and corroborated by Medzane (2021), highlighting that positionality not only shapes the research approach but also moulds research outcomes and their interpretations. Holmes (2020) emphasises the uniqueness of researchers' positionality and its pervasive influence on all stages of the research process. This recognition underscores the comprehensive impact of positionality on research endeavours.

In practice, researchers must be mindful of how they present themselves to maintain the authenticity and credibility of their research findings. Creating an environment where participants feel secure and comfortable contributing to the research enriches the study with valuable insights. Recognising the potential influence of positionality on research, I prioritised transparently explaining the study's purpose and significance to the participants. Stressing the importance of their honest involvement, I positioned myself as a co-learner rather than an authoritative figure scrutinising their teaching methods. This approach aimed to delineate my positionality in the study, validating participants' roles and fostering accuracy and credibility in the research findings.

However, despite these efforts, my perceived authority over the teachers impacted some participants' perceptions, leading to hesitation among some to be observed while teaching. Accordingly, I could not conduct the second round of observations in two schools. Acknowledging the potential impact of my positionality aligns with Holmes' (2020) perspective on "open and honest disclosure of positionality's influence on the research process and its truthfulness" (p. 3).

4.11. Data collection methods and research tools

The data collection process in this study employed a comprehensive approach involving several methods. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted in person with high school-level English as a Second Language teachers across the three selected schools (see appendix 1). Furthermore, separate focus group interviews were held with both English as a Second Language teachers (see appendix 2) and learners (see appendix 3). These methods were complemented by

classroom observations (see appendix 4), journaling (see appendix 5), and the collection of documentary evidence through learners' work.

The choice of these specific research tools was guided by the study's adoption of an action research case study design, which embraced a quali-quantitative approach. Given this framework, a stronger emphasis was placed on utilising qualitative data generation tools over quantitative methods. This approach aligns with insights provided by Dawadi et al. (2020), emphasising that "qualitative researchers rely on interviews, focus groups, and participant observation to understand situations and reveal indicative findings" (p. 26). Similarly, Tekin and Kotaman (2013) "emphasise the significance of interviews and observations in data gathering for action research methodologies" (p. 88). The subsequent sections provide detailed discussions on each data generation tool utilized in this study, elucidating their significance within the research context.

4.11.1. Interviews

The case study method is renowned for its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon by gathering perspectives from multiple individuals, potentially uncovering new insights through participant interactions (Quintao et. al., 2020). Interviews were particularly suitable for collecting crucial data from participants due to their face-to-face nature. This perspective aligns with Rouse (2016), who highlights that interviews allow direct contact, enabling researchers to gain insights into respondents' viewpoints regarding the subject (p. 143). Furthermore, interviews prove effective as they enable participants to seek clarifications, a feature absent in questionnaires. This interaction benefits researchers by facilitating probing to clarify responses, enhancing the accuracy of information obtained (Rouse, 2016). Stuckey (2018) emphasizes the flexibility of interviews in exploring initial participant responses, enabling researchers to delve deeper into the 'why' and 'how' aspects. The inherent strengths of the interviewing method, particularly in ensuring clarity in questions and responses, motivated its use in this study. Two types of interviews were employed: semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, which will be elaborated on in subsequent sections.

4.11.2. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were crucial for data collection in this study due to their inherent flexibility. While offering a structured framework guiding the questioning process, these interviews allowed participants the freedom to interpret and respond to queries independently. This adaptable nature aligns with Stuckey's perspective (2018), highlighting the preparation of questions in advance by interviewers, yet granting participants the liberty to express their perspectives in their own terms.

DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) describe semi-structured interviews as involving dynamic dialogues between researchers and participants. This approach uses a flexible interview protocol supplemented by follow-up questions, probes, and comments. Similarly, Adams (2015) notes these

interviews are conversational, employing a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions, often accompanied by 'why' or 'how' inquiries. Canals (2017) emphasises the relaxed atmosphere of semi-structured interviews, fostering a conversational environment rather than a formal question-answer session, conducive to gathering personal insights.

Questions in these interviews were deliberately open-ended to allow participants ample room for comprehensive and culturally relevant responses. Open-ended queries, as highlighted by Stuckey (2018), prompt meaningful, culturally sensitive, unexpected, and explanatory responses. The combination of structured preparation and flexibility, coupled with the allowance for probing and clarification, made semi-structured interviews the method of choice. The subsequent section will discuss the next data generation method: focus group interviews

4.11.3. Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews, another method used in this study, were chosen for their capacity to capture varied participant reactions and explore underlying reasons. Rouse (2016) highlights that these interviews blend questioning with observational aspects. Similarly, Adams (2015) emphasizes how focus groups delve into existing opinions and reactions to new ideas. Their selection aimed to gather substantial data within a short time by engaging knowledgeable individuals on the subject. Dilshad and Latif (2013) note that focus groups offer shared understanding and multiple perspectives. Canals (2017) stresses their contribution in providing depth through narratives. These advantages aligned with the study's objectives, leading to the adoption of focus group interviews. The next section will discuss classroom observations as another data collection tool.

4.11.4. Classroom observations

In this action research case study focusing on the effectiveness of reading clubs for high school reading comprehension, classroom observations were integral. They provided direct insight into classroom dynamics, complementing the study's objectives. This decision was influenced by Ndihokubwayo et. al. (2021), who emphasised classroom observations' role in documenting practices enhancing teaching and learning quality.

Beyond interviews, **classroom observations uncovered undisclosed factors contributing to poor English Language performance.** MacDonald (2016) emphasises their role in studying teaching practices, assessing quality, and evaluating effectiveness, revealing insights interviews did not capture. While teachers shared their views during interviews, observed practices presented a distinct narrative, highlighting the observations' significance in uncovering hidden truths.

Moreover, post-observation conferences were held, offering immediate feedback on teaching practices. REL Mid-Atlantic Webinar (2013) underscores this feedback's importance in implementing actionable changes for instructional improvement, impacting teaching strategies immediately and rectifying fewer effective practices.

Given these strengths, employing classroom observations aligned with the study's focus on enhancing reading comprehension through an action research case study in school settings. Additionally, journaling was another relevant data tool used, as discussed hereafter.

4.11.5. Journaling

The utilisation of journaling as a research tool in this study is supported by Lutz and Paretti (2019), who advocate for reflective practices as a means of generating qualitative data. Reflective journaling involves systematically unpacking experiences, including influential elements like individuals, resources, and activities impacting the learning process, conducted consistently over time (Lutz & Paretti, 2019). Annink (2016) highlights journaling as a repository for critical analysis of contextual factors, researchers' knowledge, and emotional responses evoked during research. Hai-Jew (2015) argues that human limitations may introduce biases, emphasising journaling's role in capturing relevant aspects of the research process. Ortlipp (2008) further supports journaling's importance, noting its dual role in describing observed events and dialogues while reflecting the researcher's emotional responses. Therefore, journaling emerged as a fitting data generation tool. The subsequent section explores the use of documentary evidence.

4.11.6. Documentary evidence

The study aimed to improve high school students' reading comprehension through reading clubs, necessitating the use of students' marked work as crucial data collection tools. These materials offered tangible evidence of Reading Club members' performance before and after the intervention, aiding in determining its effectiveness. Bowen (2009) highlights documents as essential for tracking change, while Rouse (2016) notes their significance in educational settings for gathering baseline information. Additionally, Bowen (2009) explains that documents validate findings and complement evidence from other sources. This study, being intervention-focused, required evaluating learners' written work at the start and end to assess the intervention's impact. Armstrong (2021) underscores document analysis in qualitative research as a method to derive meaning and contribute to empirical knowledge. Analysing learners' scripts helped ascertain the intervention's success. Regardless of the outcome, this analysis added to comprehension performance knowledge. Given robust literature support, employing document analysis was apt. It offered the best means to monitor and evaluate learners' performance from intervention initiation to conclusion.

4.12.   Qualitative and quantitative data analysis

The study employed a dual approach to data analysis, utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods were applied to offer intricate descriptions where necessary, while quantitative methods were used for essential numerical information. This integration facilitated a comprehensive portrayal of the research findings, leveraging the strengths of each method while compensating for their individual limitations when used independently. Haradhan (2020) highlights that quantitative data, with its numerical outputs, offers easier comprehension and

conclusive insights compared to the more intricate nature of qualitative data. The synergy between qualitative and quantitative methods is echoed by Bans-Akutey and Tiimub (2021), who emphasise that using multiple methods diminishes the limitations of one by capitalising on the strengths of the other. This amalgamation allows for verification of findings, exploration of relationships, statistical representation, and a deeper comprehension of contextual intricacies. Similarly, Hai-Jew (2015) asserts that pairing qualitative and quantitative research harnesses the combined advantages of mixed methods, capturing statistically robust data while retaining the detailed richness inherent in qualitative research. Given this study's action research case study nature, Lufungulo et al. (2021) advocate for a triangulation approach, merging multiple analysis methods due to action research's dual characteristics. Consequently, the study employed both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods based on these considerations. Essentially, thematic analysis served as the primary analytical technique, further elucidated in the subsequent discussion.

4.13.   Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis, a qualitative research method, discerns, examines, and interprets patterns of significance, known as "themes," within qualitative datasets (Clarke & Braun, 2016; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2006). It involves a systematic exploration of these patterns to uncover underlying meanings across the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This method illuminates collective or shared meanings and experiences inherent in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Clarke & Braun, 2016). Kiger and Varpio (2020) stress its focus on comprehending prevalent experiences, thoughts, or behaviours evident throughout the data. In this study, an inductive approach guided the data analysis. An inductive method develops codes and themes directly from the data content, without imposing preconceived frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Analysts immerse themselves in the data, identifying emerging themes throughout the exploration, forming the basis for further analysis. This approach suited the intervention study's aim to comprehend themes in Lesotho's high school reading comprehension issues. This choice aligns with thematic analysis, which, as described by Braun and Clarke (2012), illuminate experiences and meanings reported by participants, aiming to reveal knowable insights within the data.

4.14.   Triangulation

Triangulation, advocated by scholars like Quintao et al. (2020), Noble and Heale (2019), Habib (2021), and Odiri (2019), involves incorporating multiple data sources in an investigation to augment comprehensive understanding. This methodological approach aims to enhance a study's trustworthiness and credibility (Morgan, 2022). Rouse (2016) emphasises triangulation's crucial role in ensuring precision and robustness in validating research findings. Noble and Heale (2019) suggest that triangulation mitigates biases from relying solely on one method or observer. Habib (2021) highlights its role in corroborating research outcomes and improving overall study quality. According to Habib, reality's certainty is elusive due to observational biases and differing perceptions. Objectivity can be approached through multiple measures and observations, triangulating data for a clearer understanding. Triangulation involves using multiple data sets in a study, serving as a vital validation strategy, particularly in qualitative research. In this study,

triangulation employed various data generation tools, including focus group interviews with Grade 10 ESL learners and teachers, one-on-one interviews, classroom observations, and documentary evidence scrutiny. These methods systematically enhanced the trustworthiness and reliability of the research findings.

4.15.   Validity

Haradhan (2017) and Hajar (2018) concur that validity refers to an instrument's proficiency in measuring the intended attribute accurately. It signifies the extent to which a test or measurement accurately evaluates the specific trait it claims to measure. Ensuring validity involves the precision of research outcomes through appropriate research methods and tools. In this study, meticulous employment of suitable instruments was pivotal to assure validity. Moreover, potential threats to validity were addressed, focusing on aspects like internal validity, construct validity, and statistical conclusion validity, all aimed at ensuring the reliability and precision of the study findings.

4.15.1. Internal validity

Internal validity, per Hameed (2020), concerns the accuracy of collected data in representing the study's intended aspects. Haradhan (2017) similarly emphasises the credibility of study outcomes regarding participant selection, data recording, and analysis. Ginty (2013) aligns with this view, emphasising the validity of inferences about the source population. Ensuring validity in this study aimed at improving reading comprehension at the high school level through reading clubs involved, employing suitable data collection techniques and research instruments. Precautions against attrition included selecting a larger sample size to accommodate potential dropouts. This strategy aimed to mitigate the risk of losing participants before study completion, ensuring the sample size remained adequate to represent the study's target population, known as "mortality threat" in research (Frey, 2018).

4.15.2. Construct validity

According to Taherdoost (2016), construct validity concerns the translation of abstract concepts into operational realities, aligning with Ginty's (2013) assertion about how well a measurement instrument evaluates its intended hypothesis or theory. Ginty (2013) also emphasises the importance of ensuring that test scores accurately predict the theoretical trait being measured. In this study, construct validity was ensured by adhering to rigorous processes inherent in action research. This involved employing diverse data collection methods—semi-structured interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, journaling, and document analysis—to maintain validity and authenticity. These measures aimed to establish trustworthiness and credibility in the study's findings.

4.15.3. Statistical conclusion validity

Garcia-Perez (2012) stresses research's primary aim is to deliver reliable knowledge for practical decision-making by ensuring statistical conclusion validity. Salkind (2010) defines conclusion

validity as establishing relationships between variables, echoed by Drost (2011). This action research assessed the correlation between implementing reading clubs and enhanced English Language performance, specifically reading comprehension. Results confirmed a positive relationship between reading clubs and improved comprehension. Thus, the study achieved statistical conclusion validity.

4.16. Reliability
4.16.1. Inter-rater reliability
Ensuring research data reliability is fundamental in any study (Benkharafa, 2013). Ihantola and Kihn (2011) define reliability as the consistency in variables measuring what they intend to measure. It includes external reliability—study replicability—and internal reliability involving consistent data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Benkharafa, 2010). For readers to assess data handling, meticulous documentation and transparent reporting are crucial (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). To ensure reliability, this study employed inter-rater reliability, evaluating consistency in evaluators' judgments (APA, 2010; Fink, 2010). Fink (2010) suggests measures like training, standardised guidelines, and ongoing monitoring to improve inter-rater reliability. The research maintained high inter-rater reliability across data collection tools. Interviews ensured participant comprehension, observations focused on reading comprehension, and post-observation discussions clarified teacher-researcher understanding. Documentary analysis tracked learners' reading progress, while journal entries added insights. Consistent data handling throughout all stages ensured reliability regarding improved reading comprehension. The rigorous application of inter-rater reliability confirms the study's dependable results.

4.17. Limitations of action research
Action research, although valuable, presents limitations researchers must address. Its inherent qualitative nature renders it prone to subjectivity and researcher bias (Banda-Mutalima, 2018). Researchers face the challenge of distancing personal value judgments, shaped by their experiences, to allow diverse perspectives in the research process. This bias might influence outcomes.

Moreover, maintaining objectivity while leveraging available resources and expertise poses another challenge (Banda-Mutalima, 2018). Separating prior knowledge from objective data collection and analysis is challenging. To counter subjectivity and bias, this study employed various data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. This approach facilitated triangulation, enhancing research credibility by cross-verifying information from different sources. Triangulation diminishes reliance on a single viewpoint, thus reducing researcher bias.

In conclusion, while action research offers experiential insights, its susceptibility to subjectivity and bias necessitates methodological rigor, including triangulation and a conscious effort to uphold objectivity throughout the research process.

4.18.   Limitations of the study

This study faced noteworthy limitations that warrant acknowledgment. One notable constraint was the researcher's role as a non-classroom teacher, reliant on teachers' cooperation to establish and oversee reading clubs. Delays in interviews underscored this reliance. Additionally, the study could only conduct complete observations in School A, one observation in School C, and variable observations in School B due to teacher availability.

Another challenge emerged as two schools withdrew from the study before implementing the intervention, leaving only one school involved. Despite this setback, the study maintained the intended sample size of twenty-eight learners, albeit from one school instead of three.Furthermore, the absence of direct interaction between the researcher and reading club members hindered assessing their commitment. Thus, evidence of club engagement was primarily inferred from marked scripts and limited direct observation in one school session.

In conclusion, while the study aimed to address reading club-related issues, limitations in teacher cooperation, limited club contact, and reduced school participation may have influenced the study's scope and outcomes. Future researchers should be cognizant of these challenges when conducting similar investigations.

4.19.   Ethical considerations

Research ethics encompass the moral and legal guidelines dictating ethical behaviour in research (Parveen & Showkat, 2017). They delineate right from wrong and acceptable from unacceptable actions. Anonymity of participants, emphasised by Dooly et al. (2017), underscores privacy and confidentiality concerns. These ethics guide individuals in distinguishing between morally right or wrong actions in research and daily life. Ethical procedures were strictly adhered to in this study. Introduction letters from the National University of Lesotho (see appendix 6) and the Ministry of Education and Training (see appendix 7) facilitated the researcher's access to school principals and English department heads. Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of their involvement and their right to withdraw, documented through signed consent forms (see appendix 8). Adherence to ethical standards for research involving human subjects was paramount. Clear explanations regarding the study's objectives and expectations were provided to all parties involved, aligning with Fleming and Zegwaard's (2018) assertion. Informed consent was deemed fundamental to ethical research conduct.

Additionally, respectful treatment of participants and truthful reporting of findings were crucial ethical considerations. Honesty, objectivity, and integrity were upheld in accordance with Parveen

and Showkat's (2017) principles. The study employed triangulation techniques - face-to-face interviews, classroom observations, journaling, and learners' scripts analysis - enhancing the credibility of findings. These methods ensured ethical integrity throughout the research process.

4.20.   Conclusion

This chapter offers an extensive roadmap for executing an action research case study focused on the implementation of reading clubs to improve reading comprehension at the high school level. It contextualises the research within the interpretive paradigm and adopts a mixed qualitative-quantitative approach, aligning with the study's essence. Furthermore, it explores facets such as researcher positionality, study limitations, challenges intrinsic to action research, and ethical considerations. These elements are vital in upholding the genuineness and precision of the research findings.

5. CHAPTER FIVE:

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter conducts a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the amassed research data pertaining to the three guiding Research Questions in this study. The data originates from several sources, including learners' scores in both the Pre-test and Post-intervention test, classroom observations, reflective journal entries, and comprehensive interviews conducted with ESL learners and teachers in a specific high school located in Maseru, Lesotho. The principal aim of this analysis is to address the research inquiries centred on assessing the effectiveness of reading clubs as an intervention mechanism to bolster reading comprehension at the high school level. Thorough scrutiny of the collected data facilitated the identification of central overarching themes and sub-themes. The qualitative analysis of interviews was conducted using Atlas.ti, a software designed for qualitative data analysis. In contrast, the assessment of learners' reading comprehension scripts, classroom observations, and journal entries was carried out manually. The ensuing analysis of the interview data with the ESL teachers resulted in the following findings.

5.2. Demographic features of the study participants

In this section, I outline the demographic characteristics of the ESL teachers, including details such as their age, educational qualifications, academic areas of expertise, and years of experience teaching in the field of English Language. These specifics are visually represented in the figure provided below.
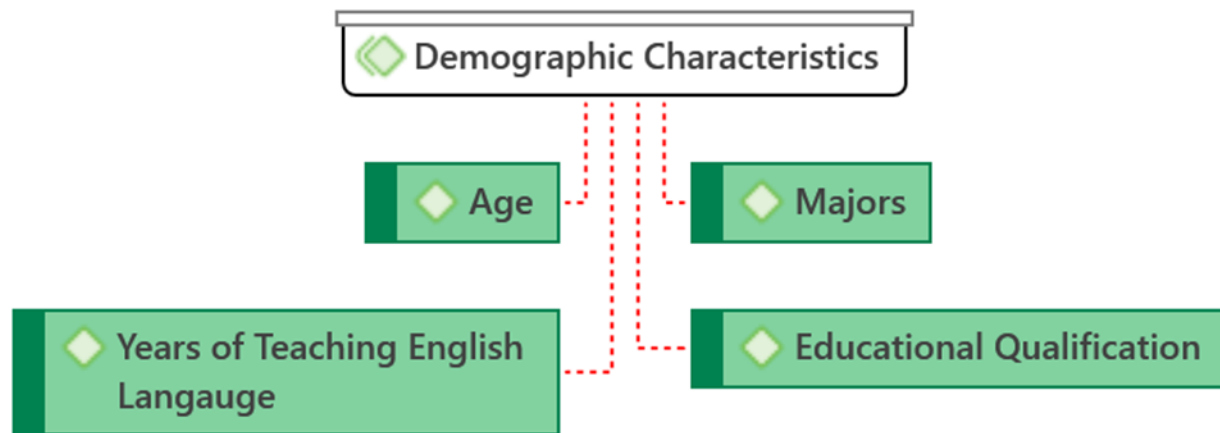
Figure 2: **Demographic characteristics of the study participants.**

5.2.1. Age of the study participants

The study participants' responses encompass a diverse age range, spanning from 28 to 57 years old. Among the teachers, three individuals belong to the 30 to 40 age bracket, two are within the 40 to 50 range, and an additional two fall within the 50 to 60 category. Furthermore, one teacher falls between the ages of 60 and 70. Consequently, there is only one teacher below the age of thirty,

and similarly, only one teacher has less than a decade remaining before reaching the retirement age.

5.2.2. Educational credentials

The data gathered from the participants' responses provides significant insights into their educational backgrounds. Except for one participant who was an intern, all others hold teaching credentials. The highest educational attainment among them is a Bachelor of Education Degree, while the lowest is a Diploma in Secondary Education.

5.2.3. Academic specialisation

Additional demographic data gathered from the study participants' responses pertains to their areas of specialisation. It is noteworthy that all participants have majored in English Language. This includes even one participant currently engaged in teaching practice, indicating that all instructors responsible for teaching English Language in the school are specifically trained as English Language teachers.

5.2.4. Tenure of teaching experience

The feedback collected from the study participants indicates a broad spectrum of teaching experience, ranging from as short as 1 week to as extensive as 29 years of tenure in education. With the exception of one individual currently undertaking an internship, all others exhibit considerable experience in education, spanning from 5 to 29 years specifically in the field of English Language instruction. The demographic attributes of the study participants are presented comprehensively in the table below.

Table 4: *Teachers' demographic characteristics*

Names of teachers	Age in years	Qualifications	Majors	Years of teaching English Language
Teacher 1	36	Diploma in Secondary Education	English Language and Sesotho	13 years
Teacher 2	46	Bachelor of Education	English Language and Literature in English	19 years
Teacher 3	53	Bachelor of Education	English Language and Religion	18 years
Teacher 4	32	Bachelor of Education	English Language and geography	5 years
Teacher 5	37	Bachelor of Education	English Language and Sesotho	5 years
Teacher 6	57	Bachelor of Education	English Language and Literature in English	29 years

| Teacher 7 | 41 | Bachelor of Education | English Language, Religious Studies and Literature in English. | 14 years |
| Teacher 8 | 28 | On internship from Lesotho College of Education | English Language and Sesotho | A week |

Research Question 1: What is the current state of learners' reading comprehension abilities?

As an action research case study, it was deemed essential to articulate the study's findings across three distinct action research phases: the diagnostic, transformative, and reflective phases. Equally significant is the alignment of these findings with the research questions addressed in this study, which are outlined as follows:

Research Question 1: *What is the current state of the learners' reading comprehension abilities?* **Research Question 2**: *How do reading clubs contribute to the development of learners' comprehension skills?* **Research Question 3**: *Why do learners whose reading is facilitated through the use of reading clubs respond to reading comprehension questions the way they do?*

5.3. Research Question 1: What is the current state of learners' reading comprehension abilities?

This research inquiry aimed to explore the reading comprehension abilities of learners, constituting the initial phase of action research, known as the diagnostic phase. This phase, as previously noted, serves as the primary stage for identifying problems or issues (Stages in Action Research, 2018), which can be accomplished through methods such as interviews and reviewing organizational records (Pinkewycz, 2012), among others. In this study, the diagnostic phase involved conducting learners' Pre-test, structured and unstructured classroom observations, as well as interviews. Its purpose was to evaluate any challenges learners encountered in reading comprehension and to understand the approach to teaching reading comprehension within the school. Presented below are the findings pertaining to the diagnostic phase.

5.3.1. Pre-test results
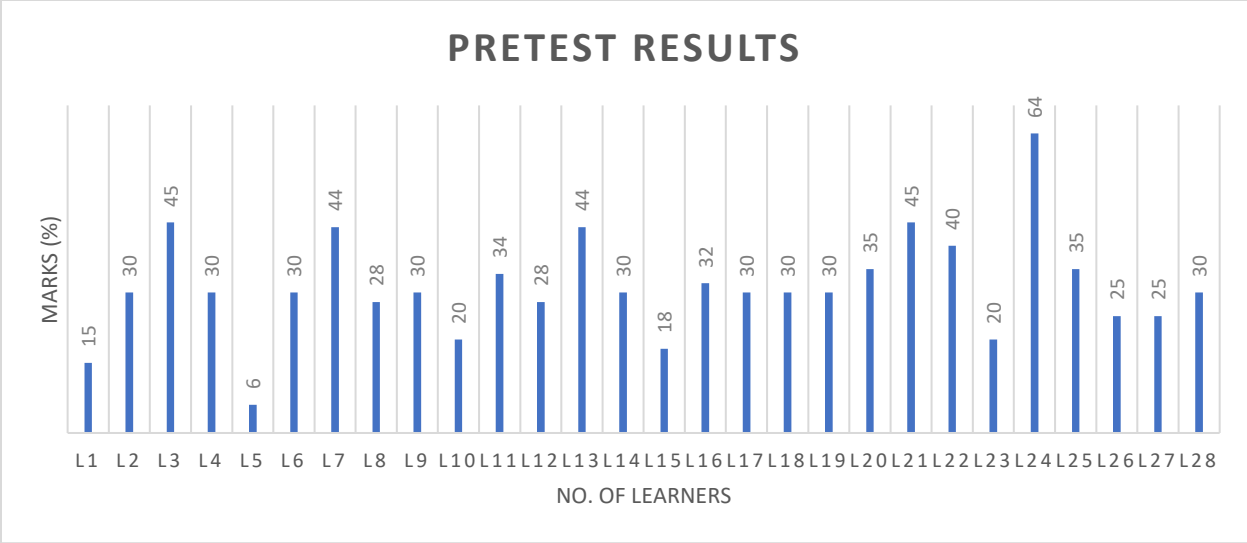
Fig 3: Learners' Pretest Results

The figure above shows the scores that the learners obtained in a pretest; from learner 1 to learner 28, respectively. That is 15% (learner 1), 30% (learner 2), 45% (learner 3), 30% (learner 4), 6% (learner 5), 30% (learner 6), 44% (learner 7), 28% (learner 8), 30% (learner 9), 20% (learner 10), 34% (learner 11), 28% (learner 12), 44% (learner 13), 30% (learner 14), 18% (learner 15), 32% (learner 16), 30% (learner 17), 30% (learner 18), 30% (learner 19), 35% (learner 20), 45% (learner 21), 40% (learner 22), 20% (learner 23), 64% (learner 24), 35% (learner 25), 25% (learner 26), 25% (learner 27) and 30% (learner 28).

Having presented the learners' pretest results, the following table summarises the same results in descriptive statistics.

Table 5: *Descriptive statistics of the learners' pre-test results*

Total scores	Mean	Median	Mode	Min.	Max.	Range
873	31.2	30	30	6	64	58

The table above illustrates the pretest scores for all 28 participants, yielding a total score of 873. The mean pretest score stands at 31.2, signifying the average score among the learners. The median score is 30, representing the midpoint value when scores are arranged in ascending order. This suggests that half of the learners scored below 30 and half scored above it. The mode, identified as 30, indicates the most frequently occurring score among the participants. Conversely, the minimum (min) score is 6, reflecting the lowest score attained, while the maximum (max) score is 64, denoting the highest score achieved. The range, calculated as the difference between the maximum and minimum scores, is 58, showcasing the variability in performance among the learners.

5.3.2. Structured observation

Column 1 (No) assigns a reference number to each reading comprehension strategy. Column 2 (Reading comprehension strategies) delineates specific strategies used in this study. Column 3 (Y) and Column 4 (N) are marked with "×" to denote the presence or absence, respectively, of each strategy in teaching and learning reading comprehension. Column 5 (Frequency (n)) displays the total occurrences of each strategy. Column 6 (Frequency (%)) signifies the percentage of utilization for each strategy. It's notable that the study included 4 inferential questions, 4 literal questions, 1 question requiring paraphrasing, and 1 vocabulary-based question as depicted in the table below.

Table 6: *Checklist for observing Teacher 1*

No	READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS	Y	N	FREQUENCY (n)	FREQUENCY (%)
1	The teacher gives context clues.		×	0	0
2	Learners identify inference questions.		×	0	0
3	Learners identify literal questions	×		2	50
4	Learners identify vocabulary questions	×		1	100
5	Learners identify own words questions correctly.	×		1	100
6	Learners respond to inference questions correctly.		×	0	0
7	Learners respond to literal questions correctly.	×		2	50
8	Learners respond to vocabulary questions.		×	0	0
9	Learners respond to own words questions.		×	0	0
10	Learners respond to summary question.		×	0	0

In this lesson, Teacher 1 did not offer contextual hints to the learners. Resultantly, the students encountered difficulties in identifying inference questions and achieved a 50% accuracy rate in answering the literal questions, correctly responding to only 2 out of 4. However, they showed proficiency in addressing the singular vocabulary question and the paraphrasing question included in the lesson. Contrarily, they faced challenges in responding to the inference questions, managing to answer only 2 out of 4. Notably, students struggled with both the vocabulary questions and the paraphrasing question. Additionally, they encountered difficulties in responding to the summary question, signifying a specific area in need of improvement in their academic progress.

Table 7: *Checklist for observing Teacher 2*

No	READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS	Y	N	FREQUENCY (n)	FREQUENCY (%)
1	The teacher gives context clues.		×	0	0

No	READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS	Y	N	FREQUENCY (n)	FREQUENCY (%)
2	Learners identify inference questions.		×	0	0
3	Learners identify literal questions.	×		3	75
4	Learners identify vocabulary question.	×		1	100
5	Learners identify own words questions.	×		1	100
6	Learners respond to inference questions.		×	0	0
7	Learners respond to literal questions.	×		2	50
8	Learners respond to vocabulary questions.	×		1	100
9	Learners respond to own words questions.		×	0	0
10	Learners respond to summary question.		×	0	0

The table indicates that during the lesson, Teacher 2 did not provide sufficient context clues to the learners. In consequence, the students encountered difficulty understanding inference questions, correctly answering only 2 out of 4 literal questions, which accounts for 75% of all literal questions. However, they successfully responded to the singular vocabulary question and the paraphrasing question. They struggled with answering inference questions and managed to respond to only 2 out of 4 literal questions. Despite effectively addressing the vocabulary question, they could not provide answers to the paraphrasing question. Additionally, they faced challenges in responding to the summary question, highlighting an area requiring improvement in their academic progress.

Table 8: *Checklist for observing Teacher 3*

No	READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS	Y	N	FREQUENCY (n)	FREQUENCY (%)
1	The teacher gives context clues.	×		3	37.5
2	Learners identify inference questions.		×	0	0
3	Learners identify literal questions.	×		2	50
4	Learners identify vocabulary questions.	×		1	100
5	Learners identify own words questions.	×		1	100
6	Learners respond to inference questions.		×	0	0
7	Learners respond to literal questions.	×		2	50
8	Learners respond to vocabulary questions.		×	0	0
9	Learners respond to own words questions.		×	0	0
10	Learners respond to summary question.		×	0	0

The table illustrates that Teacher 3 utilised context clues in 3 out of 8 potential instances during the lesson. However, the learners struggled with inference questions, accurately answering only 2 out of 4 literal questions, representing a 50% accuracy rate for literal questions. They demonstrated

proficiency in addressing the sole vocabulary question and the paraphrasing question. However, they faced challenges in responding to inference questions, managing to answer only 2 out of 4 literal questions. Notably, the students could not provide responses to the vocabulary question and the paraphrasing question. Additionally, they encountered difficulty in responding to the summary question, indicating an area that needs improvement in their academic development.

Table 9: *Checklist for observing Teacher 4*

No	READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS	Y	N	FREQUENCY (n)	FREQUENCY (%)
1	The teacher gives context clues.		×	0	0
2	Learners identify inference questions.	×		1	25
3	Learners identify literal questions.	×		2	50
4	Learners identify vocabulary questions.	×		1	100
5	Learners identify own words questions.	×		1	100
6	Learners respond to inference questions.		×	0	0
7	Learners respond to literal questions.	×		2	50
8	Learners respond to vocabulary questions.	×		1	100
9	Learners respond to own words questions.	×		1	100
10	Learners respond to summary question.		×	0	0

The table illustrates that in this lesson, the teacher did not provide contextual cues to the students. Among the questions presented, learners correctly identified one inference question. Out of the four literal questions, they answered two accurately, resulting in a 50% success rate for literal questions. Learners demonstrated proficiency in identifying the vocabulary question and the paraphrasing question in the lesson. However, they encountered challenges in responding to inference questions, accurately answering only two out of four literal questions. Strikingly, they responded well to the vocabulary question and the paraphrasing question. Finally, the students faced difficulties in responding to the summary question, indicating a need for improvement in this specific aspect of their academic development.

5.3.3. Unstructured observations

As previously mentioned, within the diagnostic phase of this action research, classroom observations were conducted, leading to the identification of several themes from the collected data: reading culture, internal administration, teacher competency, and the socio-economic status of learners. These themes are visually represented in the figure below.
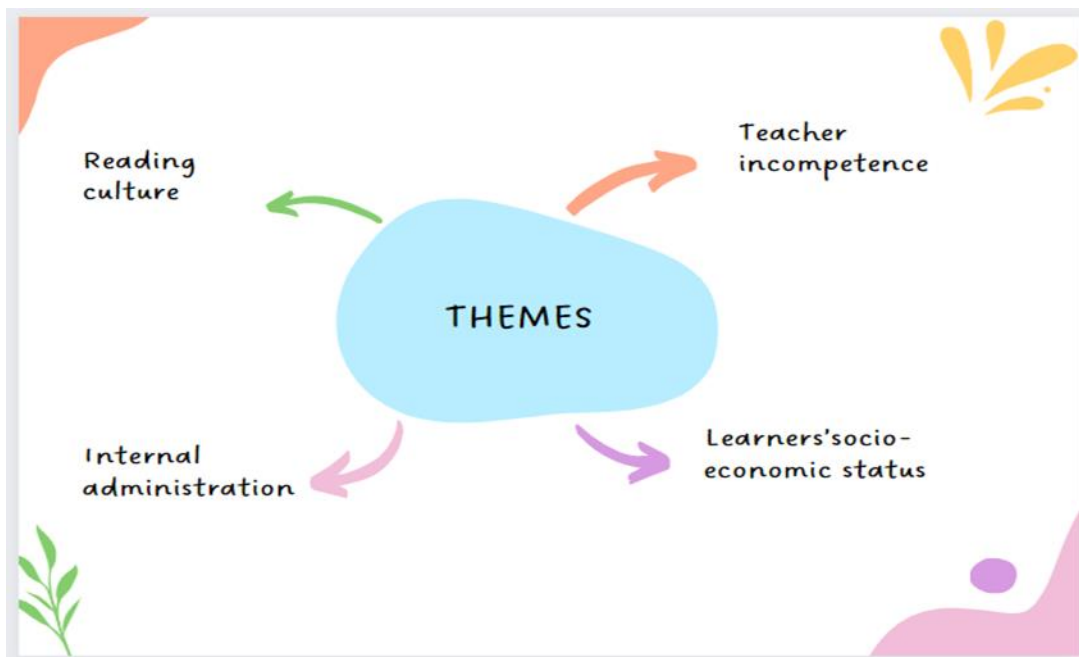
Figure 4: Themes derived from the classroom observations

5.4. Research Question 2: How do reading clubs contribute to the development of learners' comprehension skills?

The research aimed to investigate the impact of reading clubs on learners' comprehension skills, executed through the transformative phase of action research. The intervention, managed by the RC facilitator, also an ESL teacher, involved providing reading materials to club members and organizing Friday sessions for sharing readings through presentations, summaries, or book reviews. Initially, low participation prompted a reflection, suggesting that the assigned books might restrict learner engagement. Adjustments were made, allowing members to freely choose books from the school library while still expected to share their readings on Fridays.

Latterly, a significant improvement in learner engagement emerged during the subsequent club meeting, attributed to the newfound freedom in selecting reading materials. Learners showcased enthusiasm, presented varied genres, and participated actively. Encouragingly, teachers noticed enhanced reading abilities among participating students, evidenced by increased class involvement and improved responses to comprehension questions. The researcher also witnessed remarkable presentations and improved reading comprehension during a school visit.

Addressing the research question, two main themes emerged: "Sharing Reading Experiences" and "Conducive Learning Environment." Under "Sharing Reading Experiences," sub-themes included "Focused Reading," "Vocabulary Acquisition," and "Presentations." Meanwhile, "Conducive Learning Environment" featured the sub-theme of "Reading Exposure." The figure below illustrates the theme of "Sharing Reading Experiences" alongside its respective sub-themes
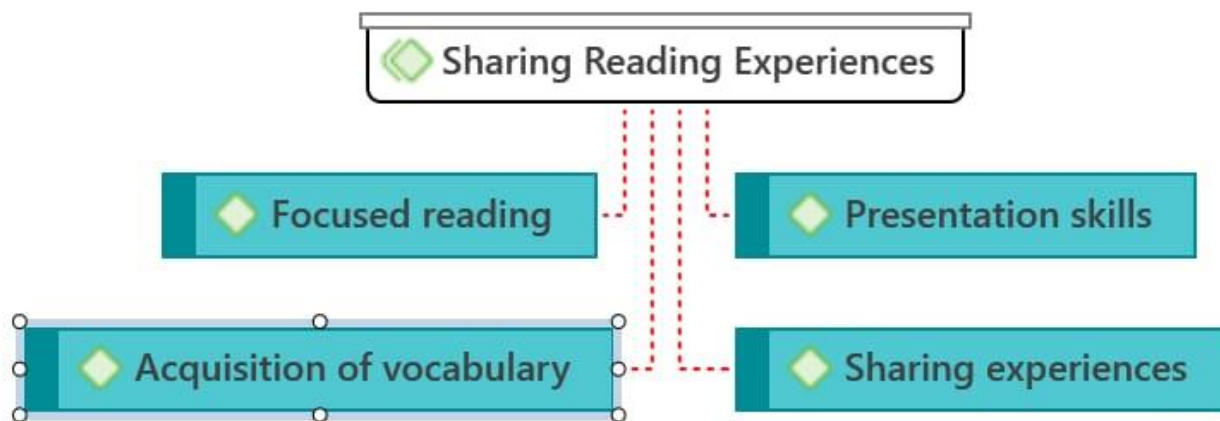
Figure 5: The theme of sharing reading experiences and its sub-themes

5.4.1. Theme 1: Sharing reading experiences

The qualitative analysis of participants' in-depth interviews indicates that Reading Clubs (RCs) foster the development of learners' comprehension skills through the practice of sharing readings among club members. Learners engage deeply with their material in preparation for club participation, striving to internalize and comprehend the content to effectively contribute during sessions. In a one-on-one interview, Teacher 2 highlighted this aspect. "*I also think the collaborative environment in the club will help them a lot because they will be sharing their reading experiences with others, listening to others present and all that staff. They will be learning so much without actually being taught.*" Teacher 2 also expressed her opinion like this during the FGIs, "*The fact that they will read with the intention of sharing what they have read will improve their reading for understanding, which they will use in the English Language classroom.*" In the same breath, Learner 16 also stated, "*In clubs, we are going to take the novels that we are going to read and we are going to give out what we have read. We are going to ask someone a question from that part he read.*"

5.4.1.1. Sub-theme 1: Focused reading

The qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with the study participants revealed that RCs provide members with an environment conducive to uninterrupted reading, free from distractions, or disruptions often encountered in a classroom setting. This dedicated focus on reading within RCs contributes significantly to the acquisition of diverse comprehension skills. As expressed by Learner 2 in the learners' Focus Group Interviews (FGIs), this focused reading environment was emphasised. *"I think the activities in the club will be more focused, for example, in class we are many and when you try to concentrate on your work or you are listening to the teacher, other students will be talking or whispering, others will disturb you and you end up not understanding what the teacher is saying. But in the club, we all know that we are going to present on what we have read, so, we are going to focus on that."* Learner 4 from learners' FGIs also professed, "*Sometimes it may happen that you didn't understand anything in that passage because you didn't read it slowly enough to understand it. But in the club, I will read my book every time I want and may be even read the whole page or chapter many times until I understand it."* Teacher 2 from

the one-on-one interviews with teachers also had this to say, "*The fact that they will read with the intention of sharing what they have read will improve their reading for understanding, which they will use in the English Language classroom when responding to reading comprehension questions.*"

5.4.1.2.Sub-theme 2: Acquisition of vocabulary

According to the analysed interview data, reading clubs facilitate the development of comprehension skills by providing learners exposure to an extensive vocabulary derived from a diverse range of genres. Specifically, Teacher 7 highlighted this aspect during the one-on-one interviews with teachers, specifically focusing on the enhancement of vocabulary skills within reading clubs. "*I think the reading club will help them because they will get used to reading and, as they read, they will learn some new words and with my help, they will understand the meanings of the words and how the words can be used in their writing*". Teacher 2 echoed similar sentiments concerning vocabulary skills during the individual interviews conducted with teachers., "*All the interactions in the club will be in English, which means learners' vocabulary will be improved, which in turn will help them perform better in reading comprehension.*" In the individual interviews, Teacher 5 also conveyed this information., "*I will assign tasks to learners to identify certain concepts that will assist with improvement of their comprehension such as asking them to identify ambitious vocabulary and get its meaning, share their findings with the club and use such vocabulary in their writing.*" Correspondingly, Teacher 3 too expressed her thinking about vocabulary skills as follows, "*I think the learners in the reading club will become interested in reading and as they read, they will learn new words and improve their vocabulary.*"

5.4.1.3. Sub-theme 3: Presentation skills

The examination of in-depth interviews with the study participants highlights another avenue through which RCs contribute to the development of learners' comprehension skills: learners' presentations within the club. Several crucial skills are honed during presentation preparation. For instance, addressing retention skills that aid comprehension, Teacher 1 remarked during the one-on-one interviews with teachers, *"Also, since they will be reading the books they like, they will read with passion, which will help with their retention and reading skills."* The figure below illustrates the theme of sharing reading experiences, specifically the sub-theme of vocabulary acquisition and select supporting data.
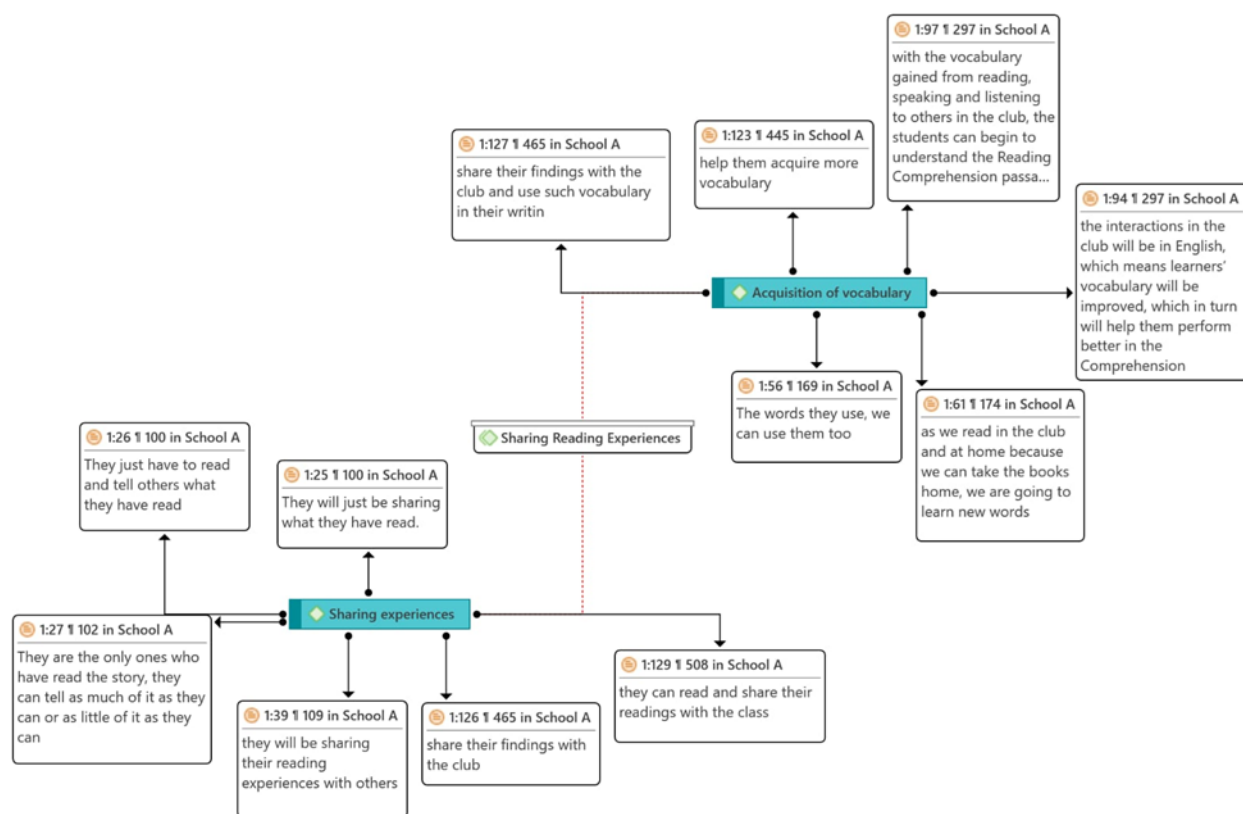
Figure 6: The theme of sharing reading experiences, sub-theme of vocabulary acquisition and their supporting data

5.4.2. Theme 2: Conducive learning environment

The analysis of interviews with the study participants also suggests that RCs facilitate the development of comprehension skills through the creation of a conducive learning environment. Unlike classrooms, RCs offer a more relaxed setting where there is no pressure to complete the syllabus. For instance, Learner 8 from the Learners' FGIs noted, *"Reading in the club will be more fun and relaxed than reading in class where you know that getting the answer wrong may lead to punishment or humiliation."* Teacher 6 from the Teachers' FGIs also emphasized the importance, stating, "*In the club, the students will be free to talk without the fear of being wrong.*" Learner 6 shared a similar sentiment, stating, *"In class, when you ask questions, other students make fun of you but in the club, they won't."*

The figure below presents the theme of a conducive learning environment along with some of its supporting data.
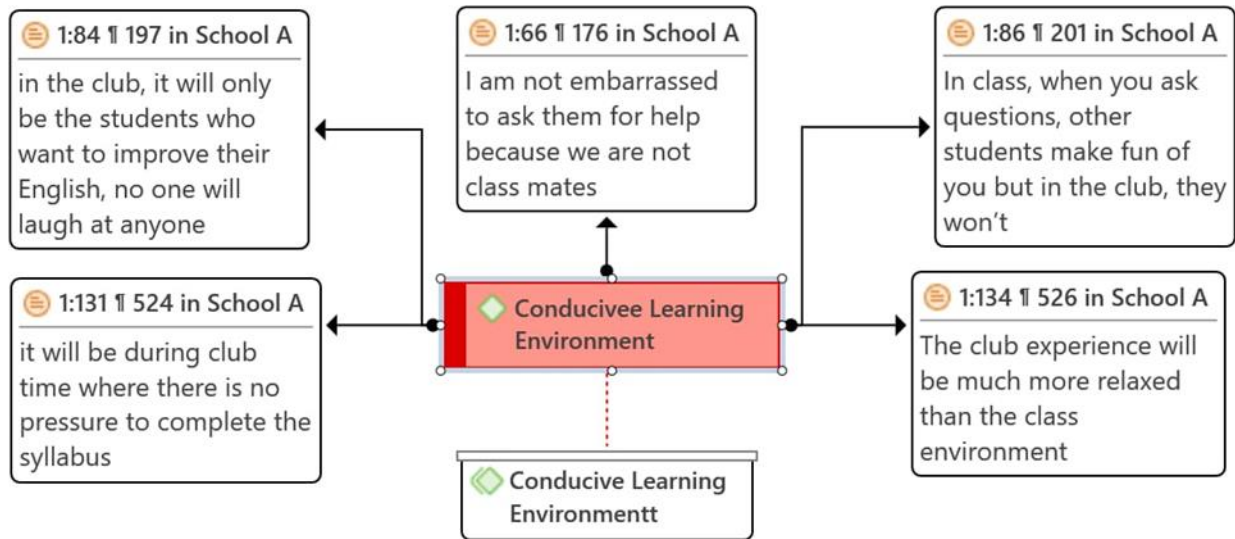
Figure 7: The theme of conducive learning environment and some of its supporting data

5.4.2.1.Reading exposure

The qualitative data derived from interviews conducted with study participants emphasizes the fundamental role of reading exposure in driving the development of comprehension skills within reading clubs. Teacher 1 underscored during the one-on-one interviews, *"The more one reads, the more one acquires comprehension skills such as vocabulary, fluency, inference and many more."* Similarly, Teacher 5 highlighted, *"I believe the abundance of reading opportunities that reading club members are exposed to in the reading clubs will result in them acquiring relevant comprehension skills."* In alignment with this view, Teacher 2 emphasized in the one-on-one interviews, *"Increased exposure to reading materials will facilitate acquisition of reading skills, comprehension of reading passages, and enhanced performance in reading comprehension."* Additionally, Teacher 4 during one-on-one interviews contributed, "*Learning predominantly occurs through extensive reading. Hence, I anticipate that the reading club will prove highly beneficial.*"

Research Question (RQ) 2 aimed to explore how reading clubs contribute to the development of learners' comprehension skills. The answer lies in the sharing of reading experiences within the RCs and the conducive learning environment provided to RC members. Having presented the interview data in response to RQ 2, the discussion now proceeds to RQ 3.

5.5.Research Question 3: Why do learners whose reading is facilitated through the use of reading clubs respond to reading comprehension questions the way they do?

This research question represented the evaluative phase of action research, specifically assessing the effectiveness of the intervention. Analysing the initial response of learners to the reading club intervention and their subsequent response from the second week to its conclusion revealed noticeable improvements across several aspects. Strikingly, learners displayed increased

enthusiasm in presenting their readings, enhanced confidence in responding to questions, and a transition among questioners from merely asking recall-based queries to posing more complex, higher-order questions. Moreover, there was a measurable enhancement in their scores on both the Intervention and Post-Intervention tests.

Upon reflecting on the potential causes for the observed shift in learners' attitudes toward reading, several contributing factors emerged. These included their heightened eagerness to present, improved confidence in addressing questions, an inclination towards posing higher-order questions, and an enhanced performance in reading comprehension.

Ultimately, it was discovered that these changes were not arbitrary but directly linked to their heightened engagement in the reading club activities. This active involvement and sustained participation appeared to catalyse the observed positive alterations in their reading attitudes and capabilities.

This active involvement was fostered by their consistent attendance at the sessions, which was influenced by their newfound enjoyment of reading, facilitated by the autonomy to select books according to their pres.

Presently, addressing Research Question 3; *Why do learners whose reading is facilitated through the use of reading clubs respond to reading comprehension questions the way they do?* The generated data revealed two primary themes: "teacher's guidance" and "reading exposure," each of which further gave rise to multiple sub-themes. Under the theme of "teacher's guidance," three sub-themes emerged: "direction and focused reading," "skills acquisition and transfer," and "monitoring and individualized attention." Meanwhile, within the realm of "reading exposure," several sub-themes were identified: "fluency in English Language," "reading enjoyment," "extra time," "collaborative learning," and "asking and answering questions." The forthcoming presentation will provide insights into each of these themes.

5.5.1. Theme 1: Teachers' guidance

Data obtained from interviews conducted with participants, including both one-on-one sessions and Focus Group Interviews (FGIs), sheds light on the significant impact of teacher guidance within the framework of reading clubs. This guidance emerges as a primary influential factor shaping the responses of learners engaged in reading comprehension activities facilitated through their involvement in these clubs.

For instance, in the Focus Group Interview with teachers, Teacher 8 articulated, *"We also outline their expected contributions, like providing book reviews. This method compels them to read for comprehension and motivates them to seek clarification when facing difficulties."* Similarly, during an individual interview, Teacher 7 stated, *"Through the guidance I offer, I can accompany them on their reading journey and demonstrate effective strategies for addressing questions after reading."*

Furthermore, in the teachers' Focus Group Interview, Teacher 6 elaborated, *"We aid them in accurately answering questions and teach them how to approach Comprehension questions in a*

relaxed manner." The figure below presents Theme 1, *"teachers' guidance,"* along with its associated sub-themes.
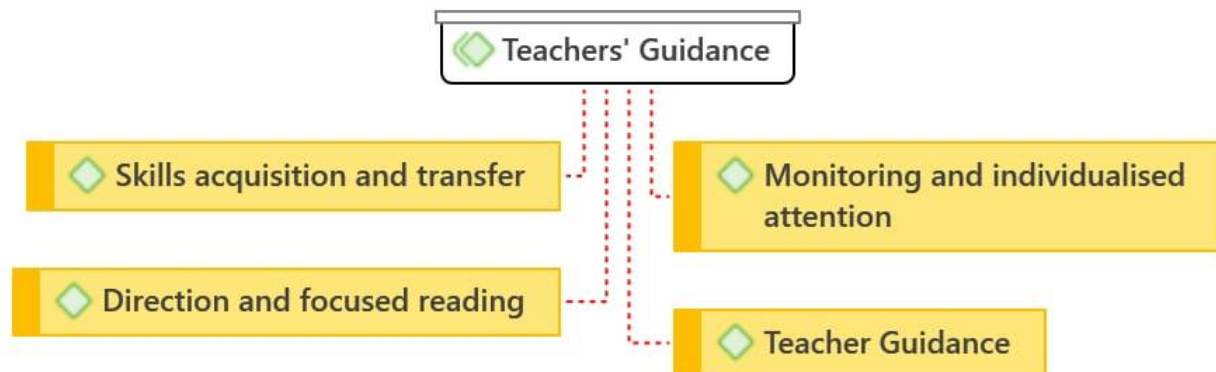
Figure 8: The theme of teachers' guidance and its sub-themes

5.5.1.1.Sub-theme 1: Direction and focused reading

The analysis of interviews conducted with the study participants reveals another significant factor influencing the response patterns of learners engaged in reading comprehension through reading clubs (RCs). This factor revolves around the implementation of focused reading within RCs and the consistent guidance provided by teachers during RC activities.

To elaborate on this aspect, Teacher 5, involved in the Focus Group Interviews, expressed, *"I believe it would be beneficial because it offers them direction. When students read independently without guidance, it often lacks impact, akin to reading without a clear purpose. However, with my guidance, it imparts a sense of purpose and direction."*

Additionally, during the Focus Group Interviews, Teacher 2 clarified, *"I will instruct the students on how to engage in focused reading. With the smaller club size and the absence of syllabus-related pressures, I can guide them in identifying key elements when seeking answers within a reading comprehension passage."*

Moreover, in a one-on-one interview, Teacher 1 mentioned, *"I will teach them the art of focused reading, breaking down comprehension tasks into manageable sections, and dedicating ample time to ensure their thorough understanding. Club sessions provide a conducive environment without the urgency of completing the syllabus."*

Similarly, in another one-on-one interview, Teacher 2 added, *"I will provide guidance, accompanying them on their reading journey, demonstrating how to effectively respond to questions, and achieve comprehension."*

5.5.1.2.Sub-theme 2: Skills acquisition and transfer

The analysis of data obtained from interviews with study participants reinforces the notion that learners benefiting from reading clubs demonstrate improved reading comprehension performance

by acquiring and employing reading and language skills within these club settings. This transfer of skills from the reading club environment to their reading comprehension classes emerges as the primary catalyst behind their heightened performance in reading comprehension.

For example, Teacher 1 shared insights during one-on-one interviews with English Language instructors, stating, *"When I assist learners in the club, such as refining their reading techniques, they inevitably employ these acquired skills during activities like Paper 2 tests. The techniques learned in the reading club have practical application in the classroom."*

Similarly, Teacher 3 also remarked during one-on-one interviews with English Language teachers, *"Skills introduced in the club, such as summarising after reading, are transferable and are aptly applied within the classroom setting."*

Furthermore, during the teachers' Focus Group Interviews, Teacher 7 conveyed, *"Active participation in the reading club, involving activities like listening to presentations, addressing questions, and providing support for areas of difficulty, contributes to enhancing their reading skills. These skills subsequently prove useful in the classroom, particularly during reading comprehension exercises."*

5.5.1.3. Sub-theme 3: Monitoring and individualised attention

Another contributing factor influencing the response patterns of learners benefiting from reading clubs in their reading comprehension relates to the personalised attention provided by club facilitators. Utilising the data gathered from study participants highlighted the significance of this personalised attention as a crucial element shaping how learners engage with reading comprehension within the club context.

For instance, Teacher 3, involved in the teachers' Focus Group Interviews, elucidated, *"Given the reduced number of students in the club, I will be well-placed to provide tailored assistance to each student in addressing implicit and explicit meaning within texts. The probing discussions following their presentations will assist them in recognizing that a story often contains nuances beyond what is explicitly stated, necessitating inference on the reader's part."*

Similarly, Teacher 5, during teachers' Focus Group Interviews, emphasised, "*They require continual monitoring and mentorship. After they have completed their readings, I will encourage them to recount and expound upon their understanding of the text. This practice alone can nurture a culture of reading in them. Thus, I believe it can exert a positive influence on them, contributing to their success in reading comprehension."*

Additionally, Teacher 2, participating in the teachers' Focus Group Interviews, affirmed, *"With a smaller cohort, it will be feasible to concentrate on each student, liberated from the pressures of curriculum completion."*

5.5.2. Theme 2: Reading exposure

The qualitative data stemming from interviews conducted with study participants underscores the pivotal role of reading exposure as a primary driver behind the enhanced performance in reading

comprehension among members of reading clubs. According to this data, the extensive reading engagement within reading clubs yield a number of benefits, encompassing the cultivation of bolstered fluency in the English Language, a heightened reading enjoyment, additional reading time, and collaborative learning, all of which collectively contribute to improved reading comprehension performance.

To expound upon this, Teacher 1, during one-on-one interviews with English Language teachers, underscored, *"The more one reads, the more one acquires knowledge."*

In a similar vein, Teacher 4, interviewed individually shared, *"I believe the exposure I can offer them within the club will enhance their comprehension of reading passages in class, consequently leading to an improvement in their reading comprehension performance."*

Likewise, Teacher 3, also in a one-on-one interview asserted, *"Increased exposure to reading materials will facilitate their comprehension of reading passages and enhance their performance."*

Teacher 2 too, in a one-on-one interview added, *"Learning predominantly occurs through extensive reading. If they restrict their reading to the classroom, their prospects for success diminish. Hence, I anticipate that the reading club will prove highly beneficial.*

5.5.2.1.Sub-theme 1: Fluency in English language
The qualitative analysis of interviews emphasises the improvement in English language fluency as a notable benefit gained by learners engaging in reading clubs, subsequently influencing their approach to addressing reading comprehension questions. This enhanced fluency serves as an advantageous asset impacting their response patterns.

Teacher 4, in a one-on-one interview, acknowledged, *"Ultimately, their proficiency in English will progress, enabling them to read comprehensively, articulate their understanding to others, and consequently enhance their performance in reading for comprehension."*

Similarly, Teacher 5, also interviewed individually, added, *"The more they engage in these practices, the greater their proficiency in English will become. Subsequently, they will harness this enhanced language proficiency to comprehend reading comprehension tasks effectively in the classroom."*

Furthermore, in one-on-one interviews with English Language teachers, Teacher 6 declared, *"I will also encourage them to formulate questions based on their reading material, prompting club members to respond. This approach sharpens their listening and retention skills, fostering an improvement in speaking and expressive abilities among club members."*

5.5.2.2. Sub-theme 2: Reading enjoyment
The examination of interviews with study participants highlights reading enjoyment as a significant influence on the responses of learners whose educational experience is enriched through involvement in reading clubs (RCs). The data emphasises that increased engagement with

reading within the framework of reading clubs reduces apprehensions linked to reading, thereby enabling learners to excel in reading comprehension within classroom environments.

For instance, during individual interviews, Teacher 7 expressed, *"Their apprehension about reading is likely to dissipate. They will gradually cultivate an affinity for reading."*

Similarly, Teacher 4, interviewed individually, pointed out, *"Given the opportunity to read books of their choice, rather than solely relying on prescribed textbooks, they may derive enjoyment from reading."*

Likewise, Teacher 3, involved in individual interviews, observed, *"I anticipate that learners within the reading club will become more inclined towards reading. As they immerse themselves in reading, they will encounter new words and enrich their vocabulary. Consequently, their enhanced vocabulary will be applied in reading comprehension assessments, leading to improved performance."*

5.5.2.3.Sub-theme 3: Extra time
In line with the analysis of the interview data, learners whose reading comprehension is nurtured through participation in reading clubs exhibit distinctive responses due to the additional reading time afforded by these clubs. This extra reading time, available both in the classroom and within the club setting, allows them to dedicate more time to honing their reading skills and applying the techniques learned in the reading clubs, which they subsequently leverage in their reading comprehension tasks.

For instance, Teacher 1, participating in the one-on-one interviews stated, *"Within the club, I will have extended periods to work closely with each student, providing individualised guidance. I anticipate that this dedicated time will lead to significant improvements in their performance."*

Similarly, Teacher 2, interviewed individually, elaborated, "*The additional time allocated will serve as motivation for these learners and encourage them to excel."*

Moreover, during the Focus Group Interviews, Teacher 3 emphasised, *"The reading time within the reading club will undoubtedly exceed that available in the classroom, facilitating increased practice and, consequently, improvements in reading comprehension."*

Furthermore, Teacher 7, participating in the Focus Group Interviews explained, *"The absence of syllabus-related time constraints allows me to thoroughly instruct them on effective strategies for identifying answers within reading comprehension passages. This includes techniques for addressing questions related to writers' craft, vocabulary, explicit and implicit meanings, and more."*

5.5.2.4.Sub-theme 4: Collaborative learning
The analysis of interview data highlighted collaborative learning as a significant sub-theme within reading clubs (RCs). This collaborative learning environment allows learners to benefit from each other's knowledge and seek help when faced with difficulties. This interaction fosters a deeper

understanding, equipping learners with language and comprehension skills applicable to reading tasks, resulting in improved performance.

For example, Learner 8 from the FGIs emphasised, *"When I don't understand while reading, having students from other classes in the club allows me to ask for help, and they can assist me."* Similarly, Learner 1 from the FGIs emphasized learning from peers, stating*, "In the club, students from other classes will help us learn."*

5.5.2.5.Sub-theme 5: Asking and answering questions

Reading club members respond adeptly to reading comprehension questions due to their experience gained in asking and answering questions within the RCs. This experience significantly enhances their performance compared to before joining the RCs.

For example, Learner 7 from the FGIs emphasized the process within the club, stating, "*After reading in the club, we make presentations, followed by questions and answers among club members."* Similarly, Learner 11 from the FGIs highlighted the conducive environment in the club for discussions and inquiries due to the smaller group size.

The figure below illustrates the theme of reading exposure, focusing on the sub-theme of asking and answering questions along with supporting data.
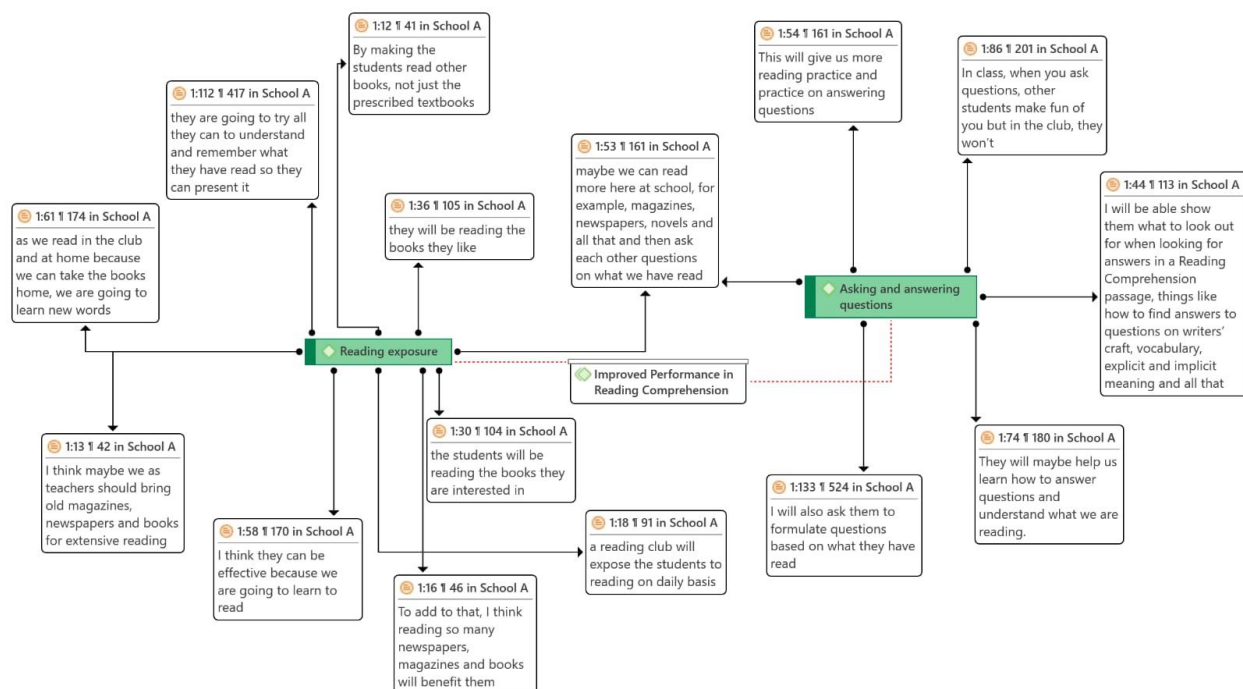
Figure 9: The theme of reading exposure, sub-theme of asking and answering questions and their supporting data

5.6.   Conclusion

The main aim of this research was to assess the efficacy of reading clubs as an intervention to enhance reading comprehension among high school students. The analysis of extensive interviews with study participants has unequivocally shown the considerable effectiveness of reading clubs in improving high school learners' proficiency in reading comprehension. This study was structured around three principal research inquiries, all of which have been successfully investigated and answered.

6. CHAPTER SIX:

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1. Introduction

Chapter 5 covered data presentation and analysis, featuring information from interviews, learners' reading scripts, observations, and the researcher's journal. It underwent three action research phases: diagnostic, transformative, and evaluation, addressing each Research Question independently. Each phase probed into the study's findings, where Research Question 1 highlighted problem identification via pre-tests, structured and unstructured observations, and participant interviews. This phase aimed to assess learners' reading challenges and teaching methodologies. The detailed outcomes of the diagnostic phase are outlined in subsequent sections, exploring reading comprehension issues and teaching approaches within the school setting.

6.2. Research Question 1: What is the current state of learners' reading comprehension abilities?

The diagnostic phase revealed key themes from learners' Pre-test scripts: poor reading comprehension, ineffective assessment, and incompetence. Additionally, classroom observations and interviews unveiled further themes: ineffective assessment, teacher incompetence, absence of a reading culture, learners' socio-economic status, and internal administration. Subsequent discussion will explore each of these themes in detail.

6.2.1. Poor performance in reading comprehension

The diagnostic phase, drawing from learners' Pre-test reading comprehension scripts and interview insights, unveiled a prevailing issue of poor reading comprehension performance among students. This observation aligns with reports by the Examinations Council of Lesotho (2016, 2018, 2019), where only one of 28 learners achieved a passing grade, emphasising the severity of the reading challenge. Interviews with educators echoed this concern, emphasising the struggle in comprehension tasks compared to composition writing.

Moreover, classroom observations highlighted challenges within Grade 10A and 10C, revealing inadequate teacher support to decipher context clues in texts, hindering learners from answering questions effectively. This issue of poor comprehension was evident across assessments, interviews, and classroom observations. Teachers' failure to impart essential reading comprehension strategies compounded the problem, aligning with studies by Adeniji and Omale (2010), Gustav and Filip (2020), Nurie (2017), and Akbari (2015), highlighting inadequate teaching of reading skills.

Existing literature supports this finding, emphasising the critical need for teachers to instruct reading strategies explicitly. Gustav and Filip (2020) stress the efficacy of explicit teaching of reading strategies

for improved comprehension, echoed by Nurie (2017) and Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), who emphasise systematic instruction and the use of organisational structures for better understanding.

In conclusion, the diagnostic phase confirms that students' poor reading comprehension stems from inadequate instruction in reading strategies. The study underscores the urgent need for educators to provide explicit teaching of these strategies to enhance comprehension and performance in reading tasks.

6.2.2. Ineffective assessment

An examination of learners' Pre-test scripts highlighted the prevalent issue of ineffective assessment, a critical theme consistent across various data sources. Similar to teacher incompetence, this pervasive theme of ineffective assessment underscores its substantial impact on learners' reading comprehension. For instance, in analysing learners' responses to a question about surprising gifts in the text 'A Devoted Son,' discrepancies arose in how teachers evaluated answers. Despite explicit details in the passage mentioning 'watches' as surprising gifts, some teachers marked incorrect answers as correct, revealing an evident lapse in assessment accuracy. Samples of graded scripts exemplify this issue, accentuating the challenge of ineffective assessment in evaluating students' reading comprehension.

Learner 1

7

Section 2: Reading for Meaning

Read Passage 2 in the insert and answer all the questions below.

From paragraph 1

4 (a) What 'good news' did Rakesh receive that morning?

The good news was that he was on top of the list [1]

(b) What was the 'mark of respect' shown by Rakesh to his father?

Rakesh bowed down to touch his father's feet [1]

From paragraph 2

5 (a) What were the most surprising gifts given to Rakesh?

Clothes, garlands and few watches [1]

(b) Pick out and write down **four consecutive words** which show that Rakesh's future was likely to be a happy and successful one.

Shining vistas newly opened [1]

(c) Describe in your own words the neighbours' reaction to Rakesh's 'exemplary filial behaviour'.

The neighbours were shock shocked that how could he bow down to touch his father's feet when he doesn't show any help on school activities [2]

(d) Why do you think the writer tells us that Varma had 'never even seen the inside of a school'?

The writer tells us that Varma had never went to parents meeting on school or even show himself to Rakesh'school.

From paragraph 3

6 Rakesh's mother thought his choice of wife was 'strange'. Explain fully what kind of woman his mother thought he would marry.

His mother thought he would marry a foreign girl [1]

Figure 10: Sample script 1 highlighting teachers' ineffective assessment

Section 2: Reading for Meaning

Read Passage 2 in the insert and answer all the questions below.

From paragraph 1

4 (a) What 'good news' did Rakesh receive that morning?

He was on the top of the results list. [1]

   (b) What was the 'mark of respect' shown by Rakesh to his father?

Bowing down to touch his father's feet. [1]

From paragraph 2

5 (a) What were the most surprising gifts given to Rakesh?

Fountain pens [1]

   (b) Pick out and write down **four consecutive words** which show that Rakesh's future was likely to be a happy and successful one.

such exemplary filial behaviour [1]

   (c) Describe in your own words the neighbours' reaction to Rakesh's 'exemplary filial behaviour'.

They were amazed by his humbleness [2]

   (d) Why do you think the writer tells us that Varma had 'never even seen the inside of a school'?

He never reached where his son is X [1]

From paragraph 3

6 Rakesh's mother thought his choice of wife was 'strange'. Explain fully what kind of woman his mother thought he would marry.

She thought he would marry a more civilized woman. [1]

Figure 11: Sample script 2 highlighting teachers' ineffective

Learner 12

Section 2: Reading for Meaning

Read Passage 2 in the insert and answer all the questions below.

From paragraph 1

4   (a) What 'good news' did Rakesh receive that morning?

He was the first in the country [1]

(b) What was the 'mark of respect' shown by Rakesh to his father?

bowing down to touch his feet [1]

From paragraph 2

5   (a) What were the most surprising gifts given to Rakesh?

Clothes [1]

(b) Pick out and write down four consecutive words which show that Rakesh's future was likely to be a happy and successful one.

Streamed, Congratulation, wonderful, gifts

(c) Describe in your own words the neighbours' reaction to Rakesh's 'exemplary filial behaviour'

They were angry [2]

(d) Why do you think the writer tells us that Varma had 'never even seen the inside of a school'?

It shows that Varma did not come to celebrate with us.

From paragraph 3

6   Rakesh's mother thought his choice of wife was 'strange'. Explain fully what kind of woman his mother thought he would marry.

Bad woman [1]

Figure 12: Sample script 3 highlighting teachers' ineffective assessment

Teachers' inability to recognise the critical aspect of surprise conveyed by the word "even" in a question, leading to erroneous evaluations, indicates an ineffective assessment. Such assessments, termed as 'assessment for learning' by Sadler (1989) and Pophan (2008), aim to gauge learners' understanding and adapt teaching methods accordingly to enhance achievement. However, the marked Pre-test scripts revealed a failure in this assessment, as it did not effectively measure knowledge or prompt teaching adjustments, potentially contributing to poor reading comprehension.

During classroom observations, instances of ineffective assessment persisted. In Grade 10B, Teacher 1 neglected to evaluate learners' understanding of previously covered concepts, deviating from the principles of 'assessment for learning.' Similarly, Teacher 3 in Grade 10C initiated a writing task without reviewing the prior lesson, contrary to Umar's (2018) assertion that assessment for learning demands immediate feedback to rectify errors promptly.

Furthermore, Teacher 2's assessment in the second lesson on pronouns emphasized only emphatic pronouns, overlooking the assessment of reflexive pronouns, demonstrating an ineffective evaluation of comprehension. This discrepancy in assessing what was taught highlights the failure of assessment alignment. Such practices contradict established principles of 'assessment for learning,' suggesting a possible cause for the observed deficiencies in students' reading comprehension. Below is an example of an assessment task highlighting ineffective assessment.

Question: Fill in the blanks with either the reflexive/emphatic pronouns:

My uncle_____

The girls_____

Tom and John_____

Jane _____

The dog _____

The nurse_____

The musician _____

The postman _____

The grandfather _____

The game _____

Figure 13: Sample question highlighting ineffective assessment

The prevailing issue of ineffective assessment, evident across data sources, underscores its severe impact on learners' reading comprehension. Teachers must be reminded of assessment's crucial role in teaching

and learning. Mulengoa and Lubasi (2019) emphasise assessment as a fundamental tool to measure learners' acquired skills and knowledge. However, assessments failing to measure designated skills render them ineffective and futile. Ojukwu (2013) highlights assessment as a stage to test lesson objectives' attainment. Ineffective assessments observed in this study may exacerbate learners' reading comprehension struggles. Addressing this challenge is crucial to prevent further detriment to learners' comprehension. The study also revealed teacher incompetence, which will be discussed subsequently.

6.2.3. Teachers' incompetence

The diagnostic phase uncovered teacher incompetence, noticeable through interviews and classroom observations. Teachers acknowledged their lack of expertise in teaching reading comprehension. One teacher prioritised competence over qualifications, while another highlighted the contrast in teachers' abilities between teaching composition and comprehension. Within classrooms, teachers demonstrated a deficiency in pedagogic content knowledge (PCK). This was evident in various instances such as confusion between phrases and clauses, misunderstanding scanning and skimming concepts, and misidentification of reflexive and emphatic pronouns.

These observations reflect a widespread issue in schools that might contribute to students' subpar performance in reading comprehension. This incompetence could mislead learners and hinder their understanding. Studies by Haron et al. (2020) and Maale and Mkandawire (2022) support this idea, stressing the impact of pedagogical knowledge on teaching quality. Moreover, inadequate lesson planning, evident in journal entries and observations, worsened the problem. Moradi's study (2019) highlighted the importance of structured lesson plans to enhance learning outcomes and avoid disruptions, echoing Ayres (2014) on achieving course objectives. These teaching and planning shortcomings likely affect the school's performance in reading comprehension.

6.2.4. Lack of reading culture

From the diagnostic phase emerged a lack of reading culture, evident in classroom observations and interviews. The challenge was intensified by delayed Ministry-provided textbooks. Teacher 2 lamented their arrival in August, impacting Grade 11 learners for seven months and Grade 10 for the same duration without English Language textbooks. Similar findings by Olasehinde et al. (2015) highlighted the limitation of book options for intensive reading, while Mupa and Chinooneka (2015) emphasised inadequate resources in schools. Olasehinde et al. (2015) and Fabunmi and Folorunso (2010) suggested that this issue stems from parental influence and students' disinterest in reading. Maala & Mkandawire's study (2022) underscored the lack of reading materials' contribution to poor comprehension. Makori and Onderi (2014) reiterated how textbook inadequacy affects syllabus coverage and teaching quality. This lack of reading culture impacts reading comprehension performance, reinforcing the necessity of reading club interventions. Olasehinde et al. (2015) stressed reading culture's role in academic excellence, while al-Mujtahid and Zein (2022) supported the importance of reading culture in literacy learning and its emphasis in the Koran. Thus, implementing reading clubs becomes crucial to combat this issue and improve reading comprehension.

6.2.5. Socio-economic status

Another discovery from the diagnostic phase was the prevalence of learners from low socio-economic status homes facing financial constraints in acquiring prescribed textbooks and supplementary reading materials. Teacher 6 highlighted that parents' inability to afford such resources affected learners. This issue aligns with Olasehinde et al. (2015), reporting financial limitations affecting book purchases and school fees in Nigeria. Similar constraints were lamented by Mupa & Chinooneka (2015) regarding parental support for extra materials like textbooks. Dynia et al. (2015) and Beth (2018) emphasised the impact of low-income backgrounds on literacy opportunities, particularly during summer breaks, leading to reading loss. This challenge of limited reading materials due to low socio-economic status was also observed in South Africa (Stine et al., 2018). Elsayed (2010) highlighted how socio-economic conditions inhibited reading in the Arab world due to weak purchasing power. The proportion of people below the lowest national income poverty line in the Arab region was noted as approximately 18.4% (Elsayed, 2010). The low socio-economic status among learners contributes to poor reading comprehension performance, as corroborated by existing literature. Reading clubs could mitigate this by providing access to library books, as noted by Elsayed (2010) and Louhoungou (2020). Street (2004) demonstrated improvements in comprehension through reading club participation. Dynia et al. (2015) also indicated above-average literacy achievement in decoding and comprehension among reading club participants. Hence, addressing the challenge of low socio-economic status with reading clubs is supported by literature and could enhance reading comprehension. This diagnostic phase uncovered low socio-economic status as a potential cause for poor reading comprehension, emphasising the necessity of reading club interventions supported by reviewed literature.

6.2.6. Internal administration

During the diagnostic phase of this research, several challenges affecting the teaching and learning of reading comprehension were revealed through unstructured observations, interviews, and the reflective journal. Poor internal administration, notably the lack of enforcement of daily lesson plans by the Head of Department (HOD), undermined the fundamental role of lesson planning in aligning lesson objectives with overall subject goals (Ayres, 2014; Ojukwu, 2013). This failure potentially contributed to students' reading comprehension struggles. Moreover, teachers' habitual tardiness to classes was a prominent issue, causing significant time wastage during teaching sessions (Jativa & Peirolo, 2021; Mulenga & Lubasi, 2019). Late arrivals hindered the learning process, aligning with the argument that laxity in administration leads to time wastage (Kodero et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the inappropriate use of the mother tongue, Sesotho, during English Language lessons contradicted the Ministry of Education and Training's guidelines (2009) advocating for English as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards. This practice limited students' exposure to English, potentially hampering their language proficiency (Giang, 2022; Phindane, 2020). The absence of online learning facilities despite available resources like computers and Wi-Fi was also highlighted. Neglecting online learning, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscored the vulnerability of traditional face-to-face instruction (Maphosa, 2021; Jain et al., 2020).

These challenges observed in the school's internal administration likely contributed to the poor performance in reading comprehension. For instance, the lack of lesson planning hindered teaching effectiveness, while tardiness reduced crucial learning time. Inadequate language immersion in English and the absence of online learning facilities during a global pandemic affected students' language skills and overall learning continuity. The impact of these challenges on reading comprehension performance necessitated further intervention, leading to the implementation of a reading club intervention, which will be discussed in the subsequent phase of this action research.

6.3. Research Question 2: How do reading clubs contribute to the development of learners' comprehension skills?

The research aimed to assess how reading clubs contribute to the development of learners' comprehension skills. This involved initiating a reading club intervention as part of the action research. Led by an ESL teacher serving as the facilitator, learners were given reading materials and instructed to convene on Fridays for discussions. However, the initial meeting revealed low learner engagement. It was discovered that the assigned books did not match the students' interests, leading to their lack of enthusiasm. For instance, Learner 18 expressed dissatisfaction with the book provided. "*I did not like the book Madam had given me. It was about a ruthless serial killer and it scared me every time I read it. So, I did not enjoy reading it.*" Learner 22 also tabled her dissatisfaction as follows, "*I didn't really like the book I was given. It was on wild life and I like mysteries and thrillers, not wild life. I think I read just one chapter of it and I stopped. It was boring.*"

The research adjusted its initial plan after discovering low learner engagement. Allowing reading club members to choose their own materials resulted in a noticeable improvement in engagement and participation during the subsequent meeting. This shift in enthusiasm was attributed to the freedom given to choose materials that matched their interests and language proficiency levels. Research by Gilakjane and Sabouri (2016) and the International Literacy Association (2019) supports this approach, emphasising the importance of attractive texts aligned with students' interests and proficiency levels to aid comprehension.

Additionally, empowering learners to select their reading materials expanded their exposure to diverse topics and genres, enhancing their vocabulary acquisition, as highlighted in studies by Pradani (2021) and the International Literacy Association (2019). This autonomy in reading choices within the club environment plays a role in developing comprehension skills, including vocabulary acquisition, among others.

Teachers noticed improvements in students' classroom reading abilities, evident in increased engagement, more questions posed, and better responses to comprehension queries. Heikkilä & Tuisku (2017) study supports this, affirming reading clubs' efficacy in bolstering literacy skills and enthusiasm among learners. Statistical data from Street (2004) further reinforces this positive impact, indicating increased interest and ease in reading among participants.

Observations also indicated enhanced reading comprehension skills among club members, consistent with Dynia et al.'s (2015) findings highlighting reading clubs' effectiveness in improving literacy, including comprehension gains. Moving forward, the discussion will delve into the emergent themes in response to

Research Question 2—"How do reading clubs contribute to the development of comprehension skills?"—which encompass sharing reading experiences and creating a conducive learning environment, each with their own sub-themes such as focused reading, vocabulary acquisition, presentations, and reading exposure.

6.3.1. Shared reading (Retelling the story)

The study investigated how reading clubs contribute to the development of comprehension skills, identifying two primary avenues: sharing reading experiences and providing a conducive learning environment.

Firstly, the sharing of reading experiences within reading clubs significantly develops learners' comprehension skills. Through story retelling or sharing readings, learners engaged in extensive interactions, fostering skills like summarising and analysis. Vu et al. (2021) found that story retelling significantly improved reading comprehension, while Qin et al. (2018) emphasized its role in language and comprehension skill development. These discussions allow learners to acquire and refine comprehension skills in a language-rich context, as supported by Daouk et al. (2015).

Moreover, focused reading within reading clubs instills purposeful reading habits, nurturing critical and analytical thinking skills. Arici (2020) stresses the importance of setting reading objectives, while Jose & Raja (2011) advocate for purposeful reading, aligning with the practice cultivated within reading clubs. Presentation and summary activities within clubs also reinforce summarising skills, as emphasised by Khaki (2014) and Nurhayati & Fitriana (2018).

Additionally, reading clubs facilitate extensive reading opportunities, vital for vocabulary acquisition, as highlighted by Fisher & Frey (2014). The exposure to varied reading materials not only boosts vocabulary but also enhances comprehension skills like inference-making, exemplified by Bailey (2020) and Casey (2022).

Secondly, reading clubs offer a conducive learning environment, promoting discussions and interactions. This environment fosters cognitive development through social interactions, aligning with sociocultural theory (McLeod, 2023). The relaxed setting allows learners to build on ideas and engage in discussions, as stressed by TeacherVision Staff (2023) and Wahl (2021).

A conducive environment like that of reading clubs is vital for skills acquisition, as indicated by Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016). It provides a safe space for learners to discuss and share ideas, essential for cognitive development (Allman, 2013). Furthermore, it facilitates inference-making skills, fundamental for comprehension, as stated by Bailey (2020).

Lastly, the exposure to extensive reading materials within reading clubs addresses the issue of limited reading access for many learners, enhancing their vocabulary and comprehension skills. Fisher & Frey (2014) underscore the importance of extensive reading, indicating that it aids in vocabulary acquisition and comprehension skills development.

In summary, the investigation into how reading clubs contribute to the development of comprehension skills revealed two primary mechanisms: sharing reading experiences and providing a conducive learning

environment. These avenues contribute significantly to the enhancement and development of learners' comprehension skills. The next phase of the discussion addresses why learners respond to reading comprehension questions in the manner they do in facilitated reading club contexts.

6.4. Research Question 3: Why do learners whose reading is facilitated through the use of reading clubs respond to reading comprehension question the way they do?

This study aimed to investigate the influences on learners' responses in reading comprehension activities conducted within reading clubs. It constituted the evaluation phase of action research, assessing the intervention's effectiveness. Observing learners' initial and subsequent responses to the intervention, notable improvements emerged. Learners exhibited increased eagerness in presenting their readings, improved confidence in answering questions (including higher-order queries), and showed enhanced performance in reading comprehension assessments post-intervention. This transformation in their reading attitude stemmed from active participation and consistent attendance in the club sessions, fueled by their newfound enjoyment in reading due to the freedom to choose their preferred books.

Research Question 3, being part of the evaluation phase, necessitated showcasing learners' performance in both Pre-tests and Post-intervention assessments. The presented figure illustrates this performance, followed by a detailed discussion of the data it represents.
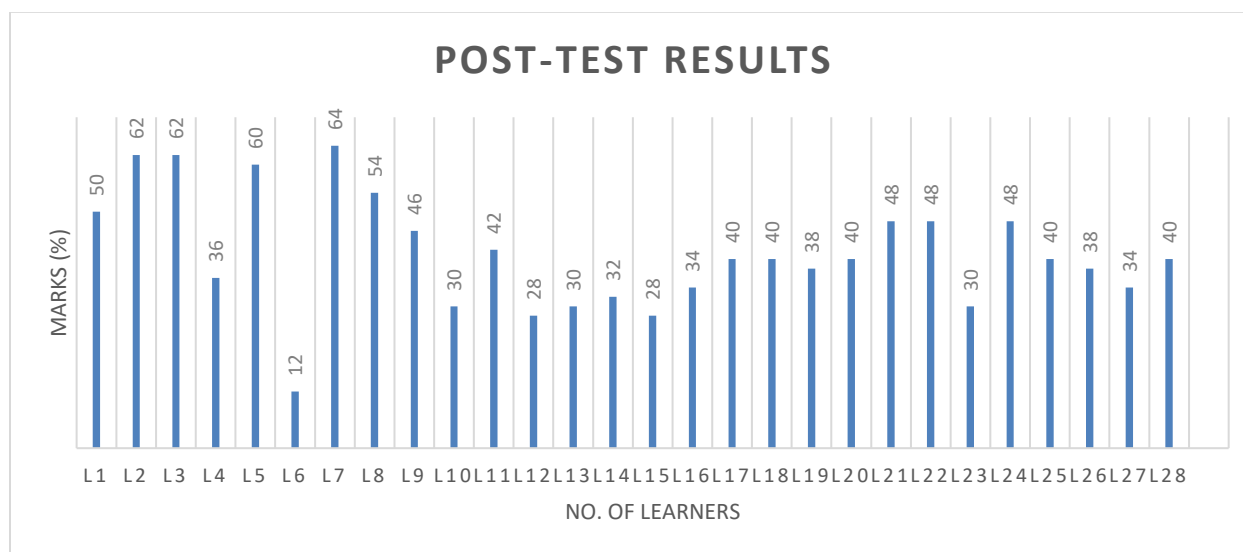
Figure 14: Learners' Post-intervention test scores

The figure above shows the scores that the learners obtained in a post-test; from learner 1 to learner 28, respectively. That is 50% (learner 1), 62% (learner 2), 62% (learner 3), 36% (learner 4), 60% (learner 5), 12% (learner 6), 64% (learner 7), 54% (learner 8), 46% (learner 9), 30% (learner 10), 42% (learner 11), 28% (learner 12), 30% (learner 13), 32% (learner 14), 28% (learner 15), 34% (learner 16), 40% (learner 17), 40% (learner 18), 38% (learner 19), 40% (learner 20), 48% (learner 21), 48% (learner 22), 30% (learner 23), 48% (learner 24), 40% (learner 25), 38% (learner 26), 34% (learner 27) and 40% (learner 28).
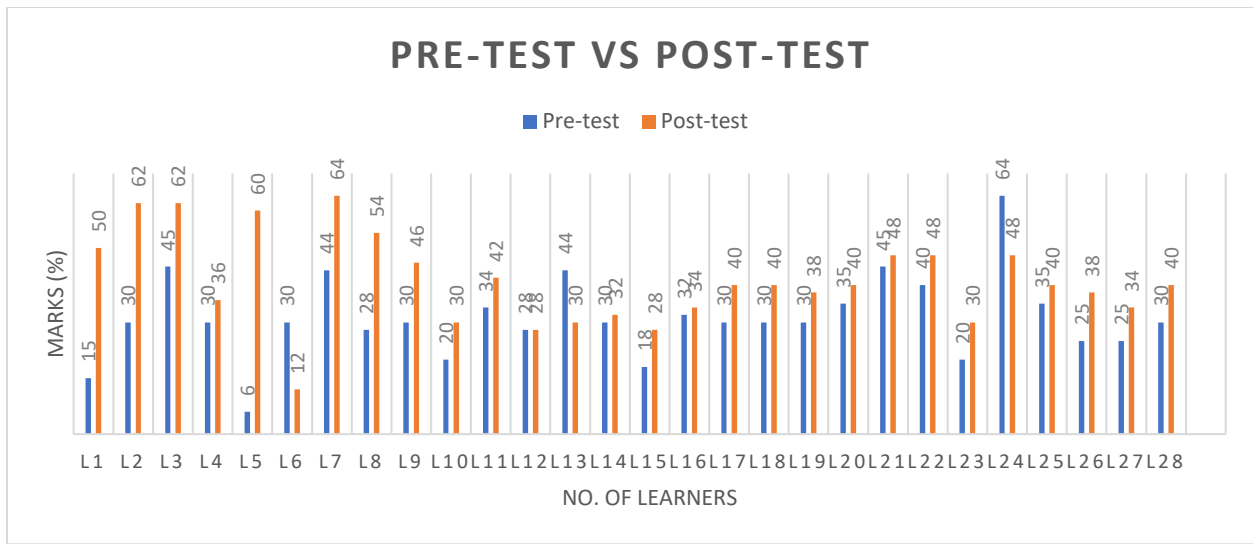
Figure 15: Learners' performance in the Pre-test and Post-intervention scores

Based on the Post-intervention test data, the effectiveness of the intervention within reading clubs is evident to a certain extent. While only one out of twenty-eight learners passed the Pre-test, six learners passed the Post-intervention test, reflecting improvement. Additionally, 24 out of twenty-eight learners showed enhanced scores in the Post-intervention compared to the Pre-test. However, three learners scored lower in the Post-intervention test, indicating regression, and one learner showed no change in performance between the two assessments. The subsequent discussion highlights areas of improvement in learners' Post-intervention performance.

In analysing both Pre-test and Post-intervention scripts, the most noticeable improvement was in summarizing questions, notably in note form, with a substantial increase from one to fifteen passing learners as reflected in the graph above. For further analysis on the improved performance in the summary in note form question, see appendix 10, 11 and 12. This improvement signifies the development of comprehension skills such as summarizing, analysing, and vocabulary acquisition within the reading club activities. This aligns with studies emphasizing the importance of summarizing in enhancing comprehension skills (Daouk et al., 2015; Khaki, 2014; Nurhayati & Fitriana, 2018).

Furthermore, improvement was observed in responding to own words questions, although not as significantly as in summarizing questions. The extensive reading within the reading clubs exposed learners to new vocabulary, enhancing their performance in these questions. This aligns with studies emphasizing the relationship between extensive reading and vocabulary acquisition (Vu et al., 2021; International Literacy Association, 2019; Pradani, 2021).

Additionally, learners displayed improvement in literal questions in the Post-intervention test, indicating the transfer of skills acquired in the reading club activities to responding to reading comprehension questions. This highlights the impact of reading exposure and literacy activities in the club on comprehension skills acquisition (Nkomo, 2021; Whitten et al., 2016; Khaki, 2014).

These improvements underscore the effectiveness of the reading club intervention in enhancing comprehension skills. The discussion on Research Question 3 evaluated the intervention's effectiveness, highlighting areas of improvement and the influence of reading club participation on learners' comprehension skills. The subsequent discussion addresses the factors influencing learners' responses to reading comprehension questions within reading clubs.

The findings from Research Question 3 generated two main themes: teacher's guidance and reading exposure, each with distinct sub-themes. Teacher guidance encompassed direction in reading, skills acquisition and transfer, and individualized attention. Reading exposure included sub-themes like fluency in English, reading enjoyment, extra time, collaborative learning, and question-based activities.

6.4.1. Teachers' guidance

Learners engaged in Reading Clubs (RCs) respond to reading comprehension questions influenced by the guidance and support provided by RC facilitators, primarily teachers. The facilitator sets the tone and expectations for the club, helping during activities. This assistance aligns with Vygotsky (1978)'s sociocultural theory, emphasising learning from those with more knowledge, serving as the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) in the RC context. The RC facilitator scaffolds learning activities, aiding comprehension skill development. For instance, the emphasis on text annotation as a strategy aligns with recognized studies.

Teachers' guidance within the RCs extends to operational instructions and modelling activities like presentations, similar to studies emphasising inference skill development through summarising and answering questions on presentations. This guidance molds learners' abilities to draw conclusions and form interpretations, aiding their comprehension skills transferable to classroom settings.

Moreover, the RC environment fosters focused reading due to the purposeful nature of preparing presentations. This deliberate focus on reading aligns with studies highlighting the importance of purpose-driven reading and concentration to enhance comprehension.

Skills acquisition and transfer within RCs emerge as another reason for learners' enhanced responses to comprehension questions. Activities such as reading, summarizing, and presenting foster skills like summarizing, analysis, and vocabulary acquisition, transferable to comprehension tasks.

Individualized attention and monitoring within RCs resonate with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, tailoring assistance to learners' specific needs. This close guidance aids learners in progressing toward higher educational levels.

The discussion illuminates how RCs equip learners with skills, focus, and tailored support, resulting in improved responses to comprehension questions. The influence of reading exposure on RC members' responses to comprehension questions will be further explored in the subsequent discussion.

6.4.2. Reading Exposure

The study discovered that reading exposure in reading clubs significantly influences how learners respond to reading comprehension questions. Reading clubs expose members to diverse reading materials with varied vocabulary, content, and writing styles, aiding in the acquisition of these elements over time. As a

result, members develop extensive vocabulary, broad content knowledge, and an understanding of different writing styles, empowering them to approach comprehension passages with comprehension and skill. This aligns with Pourhoseingilakjane's study (2016), highlighting how exposure to various linguistic and textual features enhances reading comprehension.

The individualised attention provided to Reading Club (RC) members by facilitators corresponds to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP), ensuring tailored assistance based on each learner's needs. Such guidance enables learners to progress from their current educational levels to higher competence through structured discussions and scaffolding. Additionally, the question-and-answer sessions in the club further enhance members' question-answering skills, improving their response to comprehension questions, as observed in the improved test scores of twenty-four learners. This resonates with Olasehinde et al.'s (2015) emphasis on the benefits of wide reading, contributing to mental, spiritual, and emotional enrichment.

Reading exposure through reading clubs fosters various skills, including learning, reflection, analysis, synthesis, and problem-solving, as noted by Palani (2012). These skills are instrumental in how club members respond to reading comprehension tasks, acquired through exposure to diverse reading materials. The literature supports the idea that the exposure offered by reading clubs equips learners with relevant skills applicable to reading comprehension tasks in class, ultimately enhancing their performance. Furthermore, reading exposure contributes to language fluency, a topic further discussed below.

6.4.3. Fluency in English language

Extensive reading in Reading Clubs (RCs) fosters fluency in English language, enabling proficient responses to reading comprehension questions. Jose and Raja (2011) highlight the significance of early-stage reading in transitioning from simple to complex language structures, illustrating how RC members' extensive reading enhances language fluency. Risbianto (2018) emphasises that reading cultivates vocabulary, grammar, and fundamental language skills, supporting the development of fluency beneficial for addressing comprehension questions.

Adeniji and Omale (2010) affirm that reading skills acquired in RCs facilitate language skills acquisition such as listening, speaking, and writing, contributing to members' fluency. Whitten et al. (2016) corroborate these findings, noting improved vocabulary and enhanced fluency among students engaged in extensive reading.

The literature highlights how extensive reading in RCs cultivates English language fluency, enabling members to adeptly address reading comprehension queries. This fluency contributes to enhanced comprehension performance, as evidenced by the RC members in the study school. The subsequent discussion explores the impact of reading enjoyment on members' responses to comprehension questions.

6.4.4. Reading enjoyment

Learners benefiting from reading clubs respond effectively to reading comprehension questions due to the reading exposure leading to their heightened reading enjoyment. This love for reading, as evidenced by Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), boosts learners' confidence with texts, aiding in better comprehension.

Quinonez-Beltran et al. (2023) found that active reading practices, akin to those employed by the studied club members, positively impacted learners' reading desires and comprehension.

Whitten et. al. (2016) further assert that pleasure reading significantly improves reading comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar, highlighting that enjoyment fosters proficient responses to comprehension questions. The South African Department of Basic Education (2018) emphasises the correlation between pleasure reading and literacy, acknowledging its role in academic achievement.

The literature suggests that learners in reading clubs respond adeptly to comprehension questions due to their choice-based reading, leading to increased reading enjoyment and the subsequent acquisition of language skills. This joyous engagement with reading enables them to effectively address reading comprehension queries in class

6.4.5. Extra time
Another influential factor contributing to the adept responses of learners engaged in reading clubs to reading comprehension questions is the **increased reading time** they obtain through club participation. Joining these clubs and engaging in literacy activities allows for greater time dedicated to reading. The International Literacy Association (2019) underscores the significance of additional reading time, highlighting its role in distinguishing good readers from poor readers. This extended time enhances exposure to vocabulary, language structures, and guidance from educators and peers within the clubs, granting learners advantages in comprehending reading material and responding effectively to comprehension questions. This assertion aligns with the International Literacy Association (2019), emphasising the correlation between increased reading time and improved reading proficiency. Palani (2012) also recognises the value of additional reading time, particularly in English medium schools, which emphasize this practice. Nkomo's (2021) study on the Extensive Reading Programme further supports the notion that increased reading time fosters a love for reading.

The literature supports the positive impact of increased reading time on learners' ability to respond proficiently to reading comprehension questions. This finding aligns with the present study's results, which demonstrated a correlation between more reading time and enhanced performance among reading club members in the Post intervention test. Notably, the consistent meetings of RC members in the school involved in this study, leading to improved performance among the majority of learners, emphasize the influence of increased reading time on comprehension skills. Another contributing factor affecting the responses of reading club members to reading comprehension questions is the collaborative learning environment provided by the clubs, as detailed in the subsequent discussion below

6.4.6. Collaborative learning
Another factor influencing the response of reading club members to reading comprehension questions is the collaborative learning environment fostered within these clubs. Through this collaboration, learners glean language and comprehension skills from each other (Alexander, 2011), subsequently applying this knowledge proficiently when responding to reading comprehension queries. The question and answer (Q&A) sessions following presentations foster collaborative efforts among learners, allowing for joint interpretation of authors' messages and inference-making, aligning with sociocultural theory's emphasis on

collaboration (Panwar et al., 2016). Sociocultural theory posits that knowledge is co-created through interactions across social and internal domains (Panwar et al., 2016), highlighting the significance of both student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions in language learning, consistent with Vygotskian teaching models (Panhwar et al., 2016; Turuk, 2008).

This theoretical framework underscores collaboration's pivotal role in learning, emphasising its contribution to cognitive and linguistic development within a social instructional network (Turuk, 2008). Cherry (2022) echoes this sentiment, emphasising the creation of a collaborative learning environment to implement sociocultural theory in the classroom. This theory emphasises learners' collaboration and interaction in acquiring knowledge from peers and their environment, asserting that learning occurs in the presence of knowledgeable others. The collaborative aspect involves active engagement and learning ownership. The knowledge acquired through collaboration within reading clubs influences their responses to reading comprehension questions, corroborated by Sigdi's (2022) assertion that collaborative learning communities enhance overall performance. This aligns with findings from this study's Post-intervention results, demonstrating significant improvement in RC members' comprehension question responses compared to their Pre-test performance. Another contributing factor to their adeptness in responding to reading comprehension questions in reading clubs is their engagement in questioning and answering practices, as discussed further below.

6.4.7. Asking and answering questions
The practice of asking and answering questions within reading clubs significantly influences how members respond to reading comprehension queries. During the question and answer (Q&A) sessions following presentations in these clubs, members acquire and refine question formulation and response skills. In a post-intervention assessment, teachers attributed the observed improvement in learners' test scores primarily to extensive reading, presentations, and these Q&A sessions. Teacher 3 noted the evident dedication to extensive reading, reinforcing its positive impact on learners' skills. Teacher 1 emphasised the effectiveness of Q&A sessions in enhancing response quality, noting improved justification and confidence in learners' answers.

Neirotti (2021) and the Indeed Editorial Team (2023) underline the importance of questioning skills in enhancing communication, analysis, and critical thinking. Engaging in Q&A sessions allows learners to develop analysis skills vital for comprehension. Similarly, Borkala (2021) asserts that asking questions stimulates inference-making crucial for comprehending implicit information in texts. Through these interactions, reading club members hone their inference skills, shaping their adeptness in addressing reading comprehension questions.

Jose and Raja (2011) highlight the significance of questioning in reading comprehension, emphasizing its role in strategy implementation. Khaki (2014) further emphasises the value of student-generated questions in enhancing reading comprehension. By consistently engaging in questioning within the reading club context, members become proficient, impacting their comprehension question responses.

The investigation into why reading club members excel in responding to reading comprehension questions identified two main factors. Firstly, the guidance provided by teachers within these clubs contributes

significantly to skill acquisition, transfer, and individualised attention. Secondly, the extensive reading exposure within the clubs leads to the acquisition of various skills used in responding to comprehension queries. These benefits encompass fluency in English, reading enjoyment, additional reading time, collaborative learning experiences, and honed questioning abilities. This investigation, part of an action research evaluating the reading club intervention, commenced with a discussion on its effectiveness.

6.5. Conclusion

The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of reading clubs as an intervention to enhance high school students' reading comprehension. The analysis of gathered data and reviewed literature strongly indicates that reading clubs can effectively improve reading comprehension at this level. The study addressed three key research questions, each providing insightful answers. Firstly, the investigation revealed that learners struggle, particularly with summary questions, showcasing a deficit in reading comprehension. Secondly, the study found that reading clubs foster comprehension skills through the exchange of reading experiences and exposure to diverse reading materials. Lastly, learners' responses to reading comprehension questions within reading clubs were influenced by both teachers' guidance and the exposure to reading materials provided by the clubs. These findings collectively affirm the role of reading clubs in shaping and enhancing students' reading comprehension abilities at the high school level.

7.   CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

7.1. Introduction

Chapter 6 outlined the study's findings, encompassing the three action research phases and the specific research questions. It culminated in a concise overview of the research outcomes. This chapter now illuminates into the conclusions drawn from the study, focusing on the three action research phases and the core research questions. Following the summary of findings, the chapter provides recommendations for future research directions. It concludes by reflecting on personal insights. The ensuing section highlights the conclusions derived from the investigation concerning the primary Research Questions.

7.2. Conclusions emanating from the three Research Questions

7.2.1. Research Question 1: What is the current state of learners' reading comprehension abilities?

This Research Question aimed to assess learners' current reading comprehension abilities. It aimed to pinpoint their performance level and challenges in comprehending text. As detailed in the previous chapter, this question represented the diagnostic phase of action research, addressing the problem's identification. Chapter 6 highlighted a significant discovery: learners exhibited poor reading comprehension skills, evident in their Pre-test results, interviews, classroom observations, and the researchers' journal. Other findings from this phase shed light on potential causes: inadequate assessment methods, incompetence, absence of a reading culture, learners' socio-economic backgrounds, and internal administrative issues. Further   elaboration   on   each   finding   is   discussed   below.

7.2.1.1. Poor performance in reading comprehension

The Pre-test results indicated widespread poor performance in reading comprehension among the participants, with only one learner out of twenty-eight passing. Specifically, a mere one student succeeded in the summary in note form question. This challenge was evident not only in the test scripts and interviews but also observed during classroom sessions, where Grade 10A learners struggled to find answers without adequate teacher guidance. Ineffectiveness in teaching reading comprehension strategies appeared to contribute significantly to this issue, corroborated by various studies (Adeniji and Omale, Gustav and Filip, Nurie, Akbari). Addressing this challenge, it is crucial for teachers to impart effective reading strategies, as supported by Gustav and Filip, Nurie, and Gilakjani and Sabouri's studies. This summary highlights the issue of poor reading comprehension, its plausible cause, and recommended actions. Subsequent discussions delve into the next finding of ineffective assessment.

7.2.1.2. Ineffective assessment

The study uncovered another significant issue: ineffective assessment. Similar to teacher incompetence, this problem was evident across various data sources, emphasising its serious implications for learners' reading comprehension. An illustrative example was observed in the Pre-test scripts, where despite a clear passage hinting at "a few watches" as the surprising gift, most teachers erroneously marked other

answers as correct. This flawed assessment failed to measure the intended learning outcomes, undermining its purpose. Reminding teachers of assessment's purpose, as discussed by Ojukwu (2013), is essential to rectify this issue. Ineffective assessment may exacerbate learners' poor reading comprehension, highlighting the urgency of addressing this challenge. Subsequent discussions focus on teacher incompetence.

7.2.1.3. Teachers' incompetence

During the diagnostic phase, a notable revelation was the incompetence of teachers, observed consistently across various data sources. Interviews with study participants revealed some teachers acknowledging their inadequacy in teaching reading comprehension. Others highlighted the significance of teacher competence over qualifications for effective teaching. In classrooms, incompetence manifested through insufficient pedagogic content knowledge (PCK), notably regarding English Language concepts like distinguishing phrases and clauses or skimming and scanning. Teachers often validated incorrect student responses, potentially contributing to poor reading comprehension performance. This aligns with Haron et al. (2020) and Maale and Mkandawire (2022), illustrating how lacking PCK impacts teaching quality and reading comprehension instruction.

Furthermore, teachers' incompetence was evident in inadequate lesson planning, often lacking proper introductions or conclusions. Moradi (2019) supported this, highlighting the absence of beginnings or endings in some lessons. This deficiency in planning likely affected reading comprehension negatively, echoing Moradi's findings on disruptive behaviour and reduced learning due to poor planning. The findings underscore a challenge of teacher incompetence in teaching reading comprehension, rooted in inadequate PCK and deficient lesson structuring. Another significant discovery in the diagnostic phase was the absence of a reading culture, which will be discussed subsequently.

7.2.1.4. Lack of reading culture

Another discovered issue from the diagnostic phase was the absence of a reading culture, linked to delayed provision of Ministry-provided textbooks that hindered access to learning resources. This dearth of textbooks affected not only this school but likely extended to others, resonating with the findings of Olasehinde et al. (2015) and Mupa and Chinooneka (2015), emphasising the lack of diverse reading materials inhibiting extensive reading. Additionally, while inadequate textbooks contribute to a lack of reading culture, learners' negative attitudes toward reading are also influential. Maala and Mkandawire (2022) emphasised learners' disinterest, echoed by Olasehinde et al. (2015), suggesting another facet behind the lack of reading culture in Nigeria.

This lack of a reading culture significantly contributed to poor reading comprehension, echoing Maale & Mkandawire's (2022) findings linking insufficient reading materials to poor performance. Another identified factor exacerbating reading comprehension issues, not only in this school but potentially in others, was learners' low socioeconomic status, detailed further in the following discussion.

7.2.1.5. Learners' socio-economic status

An additional identified factor contributing to the poor performance in reading comprehension at the studied school, and potentially in other schools, is the low socio-economic status of learners. This situation

often led to parents' inability to afford prescribed textbooks or supplementary reading materials for their children. Olasehinde et al.'s (2015) study in Nigeria echoes this, highlighting financial constraints affecting book purchases and school fees. Moreover, Dynia et al. (2015) and Beth (2018) emphasise that children from low-income households lack literacy opportunities, particularly during summer breaks, unless they participate in specific reading interventions. The final discovery during the diagnostic phase was the issue of poor internal administration within the school, which will be further discussed below.

7.2.1.6. Internal administration

One of the identified factors contributing to poor reading comprehension performance was poor internal school administration. This challenge was evident in participant interviews, classroom observations, and the reflective journal. For instance, the Head of Department acknowledged the failure to enforce daily lesson planning. Teachers' tardiness was also notable, aligning with Jativa and Peirolo's (2021) findings of widespread punctuality issues among 24% of teachers. Similarly, Mulenga and Lubasi (2019) reported only 30% punctuality across observed classes, with maximum delays of 10 minutes in 28 instances. Another administrative flaw affecting reading comprehension was the use of the mother tongue, Sesotho, in English classes, contrary to official guidelines by the Ministry of Education and Training (2009). Teachers' frequent use of Sesotho in explaining concepts contradicted Giang's (2022) suggestion of using the mother tongue for difficult concepts only, potentially hindering English language development. The absence of online learning resources, despite having necessary facilities, during the COVID-19 pandemic also impacted reading comprehension. Maphosa (2021) highlighted the pandemic's disruption to traditional teaching methods, emphasizing the importance of adaptable teaching models, as supported by Jain et al. (2020). The absence of online learning during school closures, validated by Chhetri (2021) and Tarkar (2020), likely further hampered students' reading skills. These findings underscored two key issues: poor reading comprehension and probable factors contributing to this challenge. The subsequent discussion will explore findings from the transformative phase of this action research.

7.2.2. Research Question 2: How do reading clubs contribute to the development of comprehension skills?

The study aimed to investigate the impact of reading clubs on learners' comprehension skills by implementing a reading club intervention. Research Question 2 marked the action research's transformative phase, involving implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Initially, all members were provided reading materials without choice, resulting in low engagement. Realising this, the intervention was adapted to allow members to choose their reading materials, which significantly increased participation and enthusiasm in subsequent meetings.

(Heikkilä & Tuisku, 2017) emphasised the importance of learners selecting their reading materials, as it enhances their enjoyment and engagement with the content. The intervention showed positive feedback from teachers, noting improved classroom participation and reading abilities among participants, aligning with Heikkilä & Tuisku 's findings. Additionally, Street (2004) highlighted how reading clubs significantly increased children's interest in reading and made it easier, supported by parents' observations in the same study.

Importantly, the intervention led to noticeable improvements in reading comprehension among club members, consistent with Dynia et al.'s (2015) findings, affirming the efficacy of reading clubs in enhancing literacy, particularly in comprehension.

Furthermore, the study identified two main themes related to Research Question 2: the significance of sharing reading experiences and the creation of a conducive learning environment within the reading clubs. These themes emerged from the data analysis, shedding light on how reading clubs foster comprehension skills development.

7.2.2.1. Sharing reading experiences (retelling the story)

The study's response to Research Question 2 regarding the development of comprehension skills within reading clubs revealed several key findings. One significant outcome was the sharing of reading experiences among learners, commonly through story retelling. This activity involved summarising stories for club members, a crucial comprehension skill (Aliponga, 2013). Similarly, Vu et al.'s study (2021) supported this, demonstrating that story retelling significantly improved reading comprehension among participants compared to a control group.

Furthermore, reading clubs foster comprehension skills through focused or goal-oriented reading practices. Club members engage in purpose-driven reading to share their understandings, thus enhancing their comprehension abilities. Arici (2020) emphasised setting objectives before reading, aligning with the practice in reading clubs that promotes various comprehension skills like analytical thinking, synthesis, and evaluation (Aliponga, 2013).

Additionally, these clubs aid comprehension skills development through presentations or summaries of reading materials. Khaki (2014) suggested post-reading summary writing as a means to improve reading comprehension, aligning with the practice within reading clubs.

Moreover, reading clubs facilitate vocabulary acquisition as members encounter new words during their reading and sharing sessions. Fisher & Frey (2014) highlighted vocabulary acquisition as a critical comprehension skill, which reading clubs support through ample reading materials and opportunities.

Another significant aspect contributing to comprehension skills development within reading clubs is the conducive learning environment they offer. Unlike traditional classrooms, these clubs provide a relaxed atmosphere conducive to learning at one's own pace without fear of judgment or humiliation (Heikkilä & Tuisku, 2017). Ramos (2022) reiterated the importance of such an environment for effective teaching and learning.

Furthermore, reading clubs significantly increase reading exposure for members compared to regular classrooms. Limited time and resources in class hinder extensive reading, whereas reading clubs provide abundant reading materials and opportunities, thus enhancing various comprehension skills (Palani, 2015).

Moreover, the exposure within reading clubs facilitates sessions where members justify their interpretations based on evidence from the text, fostering inference skills (TeacherVision, 2023). This aligns with the

practice within reading clubs where learners present their readings and substantiate their responses, honing their ability to make inferences.

In addressing Research Question 2 on how reading clubs contribute to the development of comprehension skills, it's evident that they achieve this through sharing reading experiences, offering a conducive learning environment, and providing extensive reading exposure. The discussion now transitions to Research Question 3, aiming to explore the reasoning behind the responses of learners whose reading is facilitated through reading clubs in addressing reading comprehension questions.

7.2.3. Research Question 3: Why do learners whose reading is facilitated through the use of reading clubs respond to reading comprehension questions the way they do?

This research inquiry was formulated to investigate the determinants impacting the reactions of learners participating in reading comprehension activities facilitated through reading clubs. This inquiry represented the evaluative phase of action research, focusing on appraising the efficacy of the intervention. Analysis of learners' post-intervention test scores and their performance across various question types indicates that the intervention through reading clubs yielded positive outcomes. The data shows a marked improvement compared to the pre-test results. Specifically, while only one out of twenty-eight learners passed the pre-test, six learners passed the post-intervention test, and twenty-four demonstrated enhanced performance in reading comprehension. Additionally, in the pre-test, only one learner passed the summary question, whereas in the post-intervention test, fifteen learners successfully answered it. Significantly, there was evident enhancement in learners' reading proficiency and confidence in addressing reading comprehension queries. As a result, given these improvements, particularly in test scores, it is reasonable to conclude that the reading club intervention was successful. Following this concise evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness, the discussion shifts to the findings addressing Research Question 3, which aimed to investigate the factors influencing learners' responses within reading comprehension activities conducted through the framework of reading clubs.

The data gathered in this investigation revealed two principal factors that impact the approach of learners, whose reading is supported by reading clubs (RC), in addressing reading comprehension questions: the guidance provided by teachers and exposure to reading materials. The ensuing discussion aims to expound upon these elements.

7.2.3.1. Teachers' Guidance

Learners involved in reading clubs (RCs) respond to reading comprehension questions owing to the specialised guidance offered by RC facilitators, which aligns with Jose and Raja's (2011) research on enhancing reading skills through teacher support. This guidance assists club members in independently mastering activities. Furthermore, the transfer of skills within RCs, emphasised by Whitten et al. (2016), aids in acquiring comprehension skills such as vocabulary and fluency, thus improving responses to comprehension questions across various subjects. Additionally, personalised attention and meticulous supervision from RC facilitators, in line with the suggestions of Coristine et al. (2022) and Aslan's study (2016) on adapting teaching methodologies, contribute to members' advancements in reading proficiency and the application of skills when responding to comprehension inquiries.

The discussion emphasizes that the manner in which RC members address reading comprehension questions is shaped by the skills acquired through guidance within RCs. Subsequent discourse will further explore how exposure to reading materials shapes RC members' responses to comprehension questions.

7.2.3.2. Reading exposure

One significant factor shaping how RC members respond to reading comprehension questions is the reading exposure they receive within the clubs. Reading clubs expose members to diverse reading materials encompassing varied vocabulary, content, and writing styles. Increased exposure leads to a broadened vocabulary, enhanced content knowledge, and familiarity with diverse writing styles. Pourhoseingilakjane's study (2016) supports this, linking improved comprehension to exposure to lexical, syntactic, and textual features in reading materials. Resultantly, extensive reading exposure equips RC members with multifaceted knowledge, vocabulary, and writing styles, enhancing their ability to respond adeptly to comprehension questions.

Additionally, fluency acquired through extensive reading in RCs influences members' comprehension question-solving abilities. Jose and Raja's research (2011) emphasised that developing fluency aids in understanding texts and effectively answering comprehension questions.

Furthermore, the reading exposure provided by RCs instills a love of reading among members, leading to improved English proficiency, as corroborated by Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016). Enjoyment of reading enhances text comprehension and subsequently enables better responses to comprehension questions.

Moreover, increased reading time resulting from participating in RC activities contributes to improved comprehension skills. The additional reading time afforded by RC participation aligns with the International Literacy Association's stance (2019) on the correlation between reading frequency and proficiency. Enhanced reading skills acquired through extra reading time empower members to skillfully tackle comprehension questions.

Lastly, the collaborative learning environment cultivated within reading clubs fosters knowledge exchange among members, particularly in literacy and comprehension skills. Alexander (2011) and Sigdi (2022) highlighted the benefits of collaborative learning, suggesting that sharing skills and knowledge among peers within this environment enhances everyone's ability to respond effectively to reading comprehension questions.

7.2.3.3. Asking and answering questions

The manner in which reading club members answer comprehension questions is also influenced by the question and answer (Q&A) sessions within the RCs. These sessions facilitate the acquisition of skills in asking and effectively responding to questions. This skill set, developed through engagement in such sessions, becomes instrumental in addressing reading comprehension queries.

Indeed, Editorial Team (2023) highlights the benefits of questioning, emphasizing its role in analysing concepts or situations. Participation in the Q&A sessions within RCs allows learners to cultivate and refine their analytical skills, crucial for comprehension. Consequently, these acquired skills significantly impact how they respond to reading comprehension questions.

Research Question 3 aimed to understand why learners in reading clubs respond to comprehension questions as they do. The investigation revealed two key factors: the guidance provided by teachers in the clubs and the exposure to extensive reading within the club environment. Both elements offer numerous literacy benefits that enable members to respond appropriately to reading comprehension questions. This investigation, part of the action research's evaluation phase, initiated discussions on the effectiveness of the reading club intervention

7.3. Conclusion
The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of reading clubs as intervention towards improving reading comprehension at high school level, and the analysis and interpretation of all the generated data and reviewed literature demonstrates that indeed reading clubs can be used as intervention towards improving reading for comprehension at high school level. The study was guided by three main Research Questions and all of them have been successfully answered.

7.4. Recommendations
- Based on the findings of this research study, the following recommendations are proposed:
- English Language teachers should undergo in-service training focusing on effective reading strategies, challenging topics, and proficient assessment methods. These training sessions should occur biannually—once at the academic year's commencement and another at the start of the second session. This strategic timing aims to empower teachers and instill confidence as they begin new academic periods.
- The Ministry of Education and Training ought to secure books from publishers ahead of the academic year's start to ensure timely distribution to schools once they reopen.
- Schools lacking libraries should approach the Ministry of Education and Training to request a school library setup. Leveraging partnerships such as the African Library Project (ALP), collaborating with the Ministry, can swiftly address this gap by providing books to establish libraries.

7.5.   Limitations
- One limitation of this study arises from the unforeseen circumstances leading to the RC intervention's implementation in only one school instead of the initially planned three schools. Subsequently, while the intervention achieved success, the results may lack generalizability to a broader population.
- Another limitation stems from the researcher's non-practitioner status, requiring dependence on teachers for managing the RC, administering tests, and collecting scripts. This reliance might have influenced the study's outcomes.
- A significant constraint was time. Despite employing various data collection methods such as one-on-one interviews with English teachers, focus group interviews with both teachers and Grade 10 learners involved in the intervention, classroom observations, and document analysis through Pre-test and Post-Intervention tests, the volume of data exceeded the available time. This situation necessitated the researcher to work extensively, including working day and night, to process and analyse the data while striving to meet dissertation submission deadlines.

Additionally, reviewing reflective journal entries and classroom observation notes added to the workload, posing challenges due to time constraints.

7.6.   Recommendations for further research

- The findings of this research study suggest potential avenues for future research within the literacy domain. The following areas could be explored:
- An action research case study examining the correlation between subject majors and teacher competency.
- Investigating the influence of school administration on students' reading comprehension performance.
- Analysing the impact of mother tongue influence on students' reading comprehension abilities.
- Conducting an in-depth longitudinal action research case study on the efficacy of reading clubs as an intervention for enhancing reading comprehension at the high school level. This study should involve schools equipped with substantial literacy resources, such as libraries and prescribed English Language textbooks, to provide a comprehensive assessment of the intervention's effectiveness.

7.7.   Personal reflections

7.7.1. Lessons learned

Throughout this research process, I have garnered a plethora of invaluable lessons that extend beyond the confines of academia, permeating into various aspects of life. Along this journey, I have unearthed discoveries encompassing facets such as time management, the nuances of the research process, insights into participants' behaviours, attitudes, and resistance, recognition of my personal strengths, comprehension of the supervision process, refinement in the art of reading, the significance of research support, navigating personal challenges, and contemplating the profound impact of this expedition on my roles as both a mother and a career-oriented individual. In the ensuing sections, I shall expound upon each of these acquired lessons and revelations, commencing with an exploration of time management.

7.7.2.   Time management

I acquired the hard-learned lesson that unforeseen disruptions to my schedule were inevitable. Instances such as arriving at a school on a predetermined day only to encounter the absence of the teacher necessitated rescheduling, posing challenges in coordinating amidst my professional commitments. Juggling roles as a mother, career professional, caregiver for my ailing father, and engaging in this study highlighted the preciousness of every moment, regretting time lost amid these responsibilities. Cyril (2014) stresses time's immutable nature, stating its irretrievability and Ahmad, Batool & Choudhry (2019) emphasise its unalterable essence. This research journey underscores the paramount significance of effective time management. Additionally, this expedition enlightened me on the intricate facets of the research process, detailed in subsequent discourse.

7.7.3. The research processes

The research expedition presented both challenges and rewards. Obtaining the introductory letter from the university, crucial for gaining access to schools for research, was delayed. Resultantly, the planned interview timeline was disrupted, causing a setback in commencing the study. This delay influenced the selection of participating grades, necessitating a shift from initially intended Grades 10 and 11 learners due to Grade 11 learners nearing external examinations. This need for alteration in focus aligns with Mcgowan et al. (2014) who highlight researchers' decision-making shifts during the research process. Financial strains ensued as self-sponsorship led to unexpected expenses, such as additional travel costs resulting from unavailability of test scripts or absent teachers during scheduled school visits. This financial burden echoes Ahmad et al.'s (2019) recognition of the energy, time, and financial investment required in data collection. Furthermore, insights into participants' behaviours, attitudes, and resistance towards the research process became evident, a topic elaborated upon subsequently.

7.7.4. The participants' behaviours, attitudes and resistance

Commencing this research journey brought personal enthusiasm about a research-worthy topic poised to enhance English Language performance in Lesotho. Anticipating teachers' eagerness to participate in this unprecedented study addressing learners' English expression challenges, I encountered unexpected reluctance. Numerous interview postponements signaled this reluctance, prompting a shift in focus from Grades 10 and 11 to Grade 10 due to time constraints preceding Grade 11 learners' final exams. The challenge extended to classroom observations, facilitated by cooperative principals allowing direct communication with Heads of English Department (HODs). However, teachers frequently provided excuses, potentially rooted in apprehension that negative observation feedback might lead to repercussions from authorities, aligning with Khan et al. (2021) on participants' resistance affecting data collection. Despite setbacks, this journey yielded valuable insights, detailed subsequently.

7.7.5. Discoveries

Throughout this study, a prevalent observation emerged—many teachers assessed rather than instructed reading comprehension, predominantly focusing on reading passages and subsequent question-answering, neglecting the explicit teaching of reading strategies. Additionally, identified deficiencies in some educators' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) pertaining to English Language curriculum concepts underscored the necessity for in-service training to address these challenges.

Despite these prevalent issues, a commendable revelation surfaced regarding a proficient reading comprehension instructor. This teacher's approach stood out as they prompted learners to justify correct answers, compelling them to reference text-based context clues. This strategy fostered peer-led learning, with learners themselves elucidating answer-seeking methods from the text, while the teacher reinforced their rationale. This learner-centric approach stimulated interaction, embodying Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where knowledgeable peers scaffolded understanding among less proficient peers. Consequently, social interactions as per Vygotsky (1978) and language's role as a mediation tool (Hasan, 2001) were evident, exemplifying sociocultural theory—the study's theoretical framework.

This exemplary teaching method offers promise for enhancing reading comprehension if adopted by more English Language educators. Beyond classroom observations, personal discoveries surfaced during this journey. Unanticipated personal qualities manifested, demonstrating patience and empathy, notably exhibited by persevering through grammar-focused lessons despite expectations of reading comprehension sessions. Moreover, recognising the apprehension of teachers towards observations due to perceived authority, not as a student, unveiled a newfound understanding.

Furthermore, a humbling realisation of personal writing deficiencies, particularly in linking devices' usage, was acknowledged through consistent feedback on improving this aspect of academic writing. Although not perfected, progress in this domain signifies development. These insights supplement the multifaceted lessons encompassing supervision encountered during this study.

7.7.6. Supervision

Despite the arduous nature of this journey, the supervision I received offered a modicum of solace. Primarily, my supervisor, an English Language lecturer, possessed a profound understanding of English Language intricacies, significantly influencing my research topic selection. The importance of an adept supervisor is underscored by Akyurek and Afacan (2018), emphasising that a supervisor's expertise significantly shapes thesis topics, enhancing their ability to guide students effectively. Beyond aiding in topic selection, my supervisor provided invaluable guidance and mentoring throughout this research process. Aside from the supervision encountered, I gleaned insights into institutional support, an aspect I will elucidate upon further.

7.7.7. Institutional support

Regarding institutional support, the university facilitated presentations for both Masters and Ph.D. students, aiming to refine our research abilities through observation and active engagement. Additionally, an on-campus library service was available, albeit its efficacy was compromised by Covid-19 restrictions. An online library service was also accessible; however, its functionality was hampered. The training provided for this online resource was limited to approximately two hours, and technical issues impeded its effectiveness, with nearly half of the computers being inoperable. As a result, following this brief training session, some of us, myself included, encountered difficulties in utilising the online library services.

7.7.8. Reading

I had always embraced recreational reading with enthusiasm. However, engaging into academic reading proved to be an entirely distinct experience. The necessity to engage in extensive reading, comprehend the material, and amalgamate ideas to generate novel insights was initially challenging. Maguire et al. (2020) highlight the stark contrast between academic reading and reading for pleasure, emphasising the former as an endeavour driven by external obligations rather than internal desires, thus intensifying its complexities. The authors underscore the demanding nature of academic reading, stressing the requirement for sustained effort and practice in comprehending complex discourse.

Yet, as I immersed myself in the literature review for this study, I garnered knowledge that surpassed the study's immediate scope. For instance, I gleaned valuable insights into nurturing reading skills in

children, which I now apply to benefit my 7-year-old son. Beyond the wealth of information acquired, this research journey fostered substantial academic and emotional growth, expounded upon in subsequent discussions.

7.7.9. Emotional and academic growth

This research expedition has been pivotal in fostering both academic and emotional growth. Academically, I have acquired a comprehensive understanding of action research, delineating its multifaceted challenges. Moreover, I have gained insight into the distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, comprehending their respective terminologies and discerning the contexts suitable for their application. Specifically, this study has provided me with a profound comprehension of the challenges and advantages inherent in action research, which will serve as a guiding framework for my future endeavours in this domain.

Emotionally, this journey has been instrumental in refining my patience and communication skills. I can assertively state that I am now a more proficient communicator and exhibit greater patience compared to my previous self. However, alongside the growth, this expedition unveiled personal challenges, as illuminated in the ensuing discussion.

7.7.10. Personal challenges

Based on the challenges I faced on this journey, given the same opportunity, there are a few things that I would do differently. Firstly, I would be very conscious of time management. Before my father fell critically ill, I was doing everything at my pace and I was never behind with my work. When his illness escalated, I had to shift my focus from my studies and work to him. Consequently, I missed work for days and when I returned, I had abundant work to go through. This abundant workload meant that I had to abandon my research work until I had at least caught up with my work commitments. Resultantly, my research work fell behind and I ended up having to apply for extension while my classmates graduated.

7.7.11. How the journey affected me as a mother, a woman and a career woman

Balancing my roles as a mother, part-time student, full-time career woman, and caregiver to my ailing father proved highly challenging. Rose (2017) echoes similar sentiments, noting that employed mothers face substantial time constraints, encompassing time poverty, intensity, and density. Juggling numerous responsibilities, especially this study, resulted in sleepless nights dedicated to this dissertation. Resultantly, my time for family dwindled as work and domestic responsibilities persisted throughout the day, leaving evenings for assisting my child and dedicating nights to campus study sessions. This relentless schedule exacted an emotional and physical toll. De Ravindranath et al. (2021) and Mustafina, Ilina & Sheerbakova (2020) affirm the draining impact of such imbalances on working mothers, highlighting exhaustion and diminished self-care.

However, despite the challenges, this journey provided invaluable insights into the underlying causes of poor English Language performance, particularly in reading comprehension. Empowered by this knowledge, I aim to leverage my role as a Subject Inspector to address these issues. Initiatives include organising workshops for English Language teachers focusing on effective high school-level reading

comprehension instruction and conducting refresher meetings with school administrators to reinforce their role in enhancing academic performance.

In conclusion, while this journey was arduous, it was profoundly rewarding. It expanded my insights, fostered emotional and academic growth, and enabled a meaningful contribution to knowledge creation. I take pride in my perseverance and the opportunity to effect positive change.

7.8. Conclusion

The primary objective of this research study was to assess the efficacy of reading clubs as an intervention aimed at enhancing reading comprehension among high school students. The study findings unequivocally demonstrate the positive impact of reading clubs in improving reading comprehension at the high school level. This assertion is substantiated by the noticeable enhancement in learners' performance evident in their Post-intervention test scores. Hence, it is plausible to assert that the implementation of reading clubs as an intervention strategy was successful based on the observed outcomes.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: One-on-one interview guide for English as a Second Language teachers

1.   How old are you?

2.   How long have you been teaching English Language, and in this school?

3.   What is your highest qualification and majors?

4.   Do you think your qualifications and majors allow you to teach English Language at high school level? Explain your answer.

5.   Do you think your qualifications and majors affect the way you teach English Language in line with the integrated curriculum? Explain your answer.

6.   Do you enjoy teaching the subject? Why?

7.   What are the challenges you come across in your teaching of the subject?

8.   How do you think these challenges can be overcome?

9.   How do you assist struggling learners outside your teaching time?

10.   Do you think the teaching and learning environment in the school is conducive for good performance in English Language? That is, are there sufficient resources to enhance good performance in English Language such as learners' prescribed texts, teachers' guides and other resource materials, teaching loads, effective supervision by Heads of Departments, etc.?

11.   Between Reading Comprehension (Paper 0175/2) and Creative and Directed Writing (Paper 0175/1), which one do your learners perform badly in, and why do you think that is the case?

12.   Based on the challenges you face in the teaching of English Language in your school, are you willing to go the extra mile in improving performance in English Language in your school through the use of reading clubs? And if yes, how do you think your guidance in the reading club activities will enhance reading for comprehension?

APPENDIX TWO: Focus group interview guide for English as a Second Language teachers

1. Why do you think there is such a low performance in English Language in your school?

2. Does your school have prescribed English Language textbooks for Grade 10 and Grade 11? If no, do you think unavailability of the prescribed English Language text books for Grades 10 and 11 impacts negatively on learners' performance in English Language at high school level?

3. Do you think there is a relationship between learners' promotion criteria from primary level to high school level and learners' low performance in English Language at high school level? That is, do you think the fact that there is no longer a Primary School Leaving (PSL) Examination at Standard 7, which allowed deserving students to pass to high school and undeserving students to re-sit the examination has anything to do with the low performance in English Language at high school level?

4. Examiners' reports from the Examinations Council of Lesotho highlight poor performance in the Reading Comprehension Paper (0175/2). Is this the case in your school as well? If so, why do you think that is the case?

5. How do you think performance in Reading Comprehension can be improved in your school?

6. Is there a working library in your school? If not, do you think its unavailability affects performance in English Language, especially with regard to reading for comprehension? Justify your answer.

7. Does your school have online learning facilities? If yes, or no, do you think that has any impact on learners' performance in English Language, especially in the Reading for Comprehension paper? Justify your answer.

8. Do you think your school's location has any impact on learners' performance in English Language, especially in Reading Comprehension? Explain your answer.

9. Do you think teacher qualifications and majors affect the way teachers teach and therefore affect performance in English Language? Explain your answer.

10. Does your school have any learning activities other than classroom teaching and learning that enhance performance in English Language such as spelling bee, debates, reading clubs, etc.? if yes, which ones?

11. There is literature highlighting effectiveness of reading clubs in improving performance in reading comprehension. (a). Is there a reading club in your school? (b). If no, do you also think they can be helpful in improving performance in reading comprehension? Justify your answer.

12. What do you think reading clubs do differently from normal classroom teaching and learning that helps improve reading for comprehension?

13. Based on the challenges you face in the teaching of English Language in your school, are you willing to go the extra mile in improving performance in English Language in your school through the use of reading clubs? And if yes, how do you think your guidance in the reading club activities will enhance reading for comprehension?

APPENDIX THREE: Focus group interview guide for English as a Second Language learners

1. Why do you think there is such a low performance in English Language in your school?

2. Do you have prescribed textbooks for English Language for your grade? If no, do you think their unavailability impacts negatively on performance in the subject, especially in reading comprehension?

3. Do you think Covid-19 had any impact on learners' performance in English Language in the 2020 and 2021 external examinations? Explain your answer.

4. Between English Language Paper 1 (Creative and Directed Writing) and English Language Paper II (Reading Comprehension), which one do you find challenging and why?

5. How do you think performance in reading comprehension can be improved in your school?

6. Are there any English activities outside the classroom that enhance performance in English Language in your school such as spelling bee, debates, drama, etc.?

7. Do you think reading clubs can be effective in improving reading for comprehension in your school? If so, how?

8. What do you think reading clubs do differently from normal classroom teaching and learning that helps improve reading for comprehension? Explain your answer.

APPENDIX FOUR: Structured classroom observation checklist

No	READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS	Y	N	FREQUENCY (n)	FREQUENCY (%)
1	The teacher gives context clues.				
2	Learners identify inference questions.				
3	Learners identify literal questions				
4	Learners identify vocabulary questions				
5	Learners identify own words questions correctly.				
6	Learners respond to inference questions correctly.				
7	Learners respond to literal questions correctly.				
8	Learners respond to vocabulary questions.				
9	Learners respond to own words questions.				
10	Learners respond to summary question.				

APPENDIX FIVE: Sample journal entry from the researcher's reflective journal

Date: 14ᵗʰ September 2022- Teacher 1's classroom observation

Even though the learners had recently received their prescribed English Language textbooks, not all of them had brought them to class and consequently, most of them were sharing a textbook, which was not ideal for a Reading Comprehension class. This sharing of books could therefore be another reason for the high failure rate in English Language in the school.

Moreover, there was no discipline in the school because this class was immediately after the short break and some learners came into the class late. However, the teacher neither disciplined nor reprimanded them. This late coming caused disruptions in class and it also meant that those who came late missed some parts of the lesson. If this happened frequently, then it could be one of the reasons for the poor performance in English Language in the school.

The teacher code-switched from Sesotho to English for no apparent reason as she was not explaining any challenging concepts. If this unnecessary code-switching by teachers in the English Language lessons happened frequently, then it was probably another reason for the poor performance in English Language in the school.

The teacher failed to make the learners see the linking device "in addition" as a context clue to the question as expected. Consequently, the learners were struggling to come up with the second reason as it came after "in addition". She failed to highlight the significance of "in addition" in the text. This lack of teaching skills, is probably another reason for the poor performance in English Language in the school.

The teacher also accepted correct answers as they were without asking learners to justify them with context clues from the text, which made them think their answers were correct. This way, it would help struggling learners learn how to get correct answers to Reading Comprehension questions. Once again, this demonstrated the teacher's lack of teaching skills, and another possible reason for the poor performance in English Language in the school.

The teacher also demonstrated lack of pedagogic content knowledge of the concepts of phrases and clauses. For example, the question asked for a phrase but the learner gave an independent clause and the teacher accepted it as correct, without any corrections. If this happened regularly, then it was another reason for the poor pass rate in English Language in the school.

Again, when the learners were unable to answer an own words question, she gave them the correct answer without showing them the context clues in the passage that they had to pay attention to in order to get the answer correct. If she keeps doing this, her learners will never learn how to search for context clues to correct answers and will ultimately fail Reading Comprehension.

APPENDIX SIX: INTRODUCTION LETTER

National University of Lesotho
Faculty of Education
P.O. Roma 180

10th May 2022

The Principal
St. James Anglican High School
Maseru

Dear Principal

Re: introduction of Masters Student – 'Matiisetso Mohapi (199601083)

This letter kindly introduces the above named MA.Ed student to your school. She is conducting research on *"Reading clubs as intervention towards improving reading for comprehension: an action research case study at three schools in Maseru district in Lesotho."* This research has potential to significantly contribute to the teaching of English in schools and generate further strategies to assist teachers and learners to invigorate the study of English Language.

Please accord her the assistance she needs to carry out this research which our education could considerably benefit from.

Sincerely,

Mahao Mahao, PhD
Head – Department of Language and Social Education

APPENDIX SEVEN: Ethical Clearance From The Ministry Of Education And Training

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING – MASERU

P.O.BOX 47 MASERU 100   TEL:22322816

The Principal

Christ the King High School

Roma 180

Dear Principal

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY FOR A MASTERS PROGRAMME

This letter serves to introduce 'Matiisetso Mohapi, Student Number 199601083 to your office. She is a Masters student conducting a research study on **Reading clubs as intervention towards improving reading for comprehension:** A case study at three schools in Maseru district, Lesotho. A research of this nature has the potential to improve the teaching and learning of English Language in our schools, hence I have given her permission to go to all the three schools she intends to work with.

May your kind office assist her with all she might need in your school to conduct this study. Your usual cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Regards

Teboho Moneri (Mr.) Acting CEO- Secondary

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING – MASERU

P.O.BOX 47 MASERU 100   TEL:22322816

The Principal

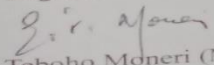St. James Anglican High School

Maseru

Dear Principal

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY FOR A MASTERS PROGRAMME

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Regards

Teboho Moneri (Mr.)

Acting CEO- Secondary

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING – MASERU

P.O.BOX 47 MASERU 100   TEL:22322816

The principal

Maseru Day High School

Maseru

Dear Principal

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY FOR A MASTERS PROGRAMME

This letter serves to introduce 'Matiisetso Mohapi, Student Number 199601083 to your office. She is a Masters student conducting a research study on **Reading clubs as intervention towards improving reading for comprehension**: A case study at three schools in Maseru district, Lesotho. Research of this nature has the potential to improve the teaching and learning of English Language in our schools, hence I have given her permission to go to all the three schools she intends to work with.

May your kind office assist her with all she might need in your school to conduct this study. Your usual cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Regards

Teboho Moneri (Mr.) Acting CEO- Secondary

APPENDIX EIGHT: Consent form for teachers

Title of the study

Reading clubs as intervention towards improving reading for comprehension: An action research case study at one high school in Maseru, Lesotho.

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of reading clubs as intervention towards improving reading for comprehension at high school level. It is an action research case study to be conducted at one high school in Maseru, Lesotho.

Study procedure

The study procedures will consist of focus group interviews with all the members of the English Department in the school, one-on-one interviews with all the members of the English Department in the school, focus group interviews with Grade 10 learners meant to take part in the reading clubs, classroom observations for those English Language teachers teaching Grade 10, from whose classes the reading club members will come, reflective journalling by the researcher, as well as pre-test and post-intervention tests for the reading club members.

The English Department is expected to establish a reading club which should be open to any learner who is interested but should ensure that some Grade 10 learners are part of the reading club, because they are the main focus of the study. 28 Grade 10 learners will be ear marked for participation in the reading club so that their performance in English Language can be monitored throughout the whole study in order to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. For the purposes of evaluation, the learners' June Examination marks in English Language, particularly the Reading Comprehension paper will be used as the baseline mark or pre-test mark. At the end of the intervention, another test; post-intervention test, will be administered for the reading club members in order to evaluate the impact of the reading clubs on learners' performance in the reading comprehension paper.

The interviews will be conducted in English as and where permission is granted, and they will be recorded using a voice recorder. All of the recordings made will be kept confidential and will only be used and listened to by the researcher and the supervisor to ensure adequate capturing of the participants' responses to the interviews. The times for interviews and observations will be communicated beforehand to avoid any inconveniences.

Benefits

The potential benefits of this study include improvement not only in learners' reading comprehension but also in all language skills such as listening, speaking and writing, which will have a positive impact not only in English Language as a subject, but in all the subjects across the curriculum. Furthermore, this study will be beneficial in informing ministerial policy on literacy issues not only in Lesotho but globally.

Confidentiality

Your participation in this study will be anonymous and as such, any publications made on this research will not make reference to your name or the name of your school.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any point in time.

Contact information

If you have questions at any time about this study or your rights as a research participant, please contact the researcher at 59035225.

Consent

I have read and understand the provided information above. I also understand that my participation is voluntary, meaning I am free to withdraw at any given time, without giving a reason and without cost. Therefore, I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX NINE: Parental consent form for learners (in Sesotho)
Motsoali / Mohlokomeli ea ratehang,

Re: Tumello ea batsoali bakeng sa ho kenya letsoho hoa baithuti thutong ea lipatlisiso

Ke tšepa hore lengolo lena le tla le fumana le phetse hantle. Lebitso la ka ke 'Matiisetso Mohapi, ke moithuti Univesithing ea Naha ea Lesotho moo ke ntseng ke ithutela lengolo la Master of Arts in Education. Ke ntse ke etsa lipatlisiso e le karolo ea boithuto baka, 'me ka lengolo lena ke kopa tumello ea hau bakeng sa ho nka karolo hoa ngoana oa hau boithutong bona bo bitsoang "Lihlopha tsa ho bala (reading clubs) ele thusetso malebana le ho ntlafatsa hoballa kutloisiso boemong ba sekolo se phahameng (high school level)."

Maikemisetso a boithuto bona ke ho hlahloba katleho ea ho kenya ts'ebetsong lihlopha tsa ho bala (reading clubs) ele leano la ho ntlafatsa ho balla kutloisiso boemong ba sekolo se phahameng (high school level).

Haeba u fana ka tumello ea hore ngoana oa hao a kenye letsoho lipatlisisong tsena, o tla kenya letsoho mesebetsing ea lihlopha tsa ho bala (reading clubs) le sehlopheng sa hae (Grade) seo aleng ho sona moo teng a tla ngola lihlahlobo tsa ho balla kutloisiso. Boitsebiso ba ngoana oa hao bo tla lula e le lekunutu.

Ha ho na likotsi tse tsejoang tse amanang le ho kenya letsoho phuputsong ena. Ho feta moo, ho bohlokoa ho u hlokomelisa hore ho nka karolo lipatlisisong tsena ke boithaopo, 'me haeba u lumela hore ngoana oa hao a nke karolo phuputsong ena, ka kopo tekena foromo ea tumello e hokeletsoeng lengolong lena mme o e fe ngoana oa hao hore a e busetse sekolong. Haeba una le lipotso, matšoenyeho, kapa u ohloka tlhaiso-leseling e batsi, ke kopa u ikopanye le nna ho +266 59035225.

Ke leboha ho nka karolo hoa ngoana oa hau lipatlisisong tsena ka tumello ea hau. Tšehetso ea hau e ananeloa haholo.

Ka botšepehi,

'Matiisetso Mohapi

Foromo ea Tumello

Nna, _____ ke motsoali kapa mohlokomeli oa _____, moithuti oa sehlopha sa leshome. Ke balile mme ka utloisisa tlhahiso-leseling e fanoeng lengolong le ka holimo mabapi le phuputso ena. Ka hona ke fana ka tumello ea hore ngoana oa ka a nke karolo phuputsong ena.

Kea utloisisa hore ho nka karolo ke boithaopo le hore ngoana oa ka a ka ikhula phuputsong ena neng kapa neng ntle le lipehelo. Kea tseba hore litaba tsohle tse mabapi le liphuphutso tsena etlaba lekunutu, mme tlaleho e tla etsoa qetellong ea boithuto bona ha ena ho kenyeletsa lebitso la ngoana oaka.

Ke bile le monyetla oa ho botsa lipotso 'me ke fumane likarabo tse khotsofatsang.

Mabitso felletseng a motsoali/mohlokomeli_____

Motekeno oa motsoali/mohlokomeli_____

Likamano le ngoana _____

Letsatsi (date)_____

APPENDIX TEN: Appendix 10 Sample script 1 for improved performance in summary in note form

LELTA

Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education

GRADE 10

CANDIDATE NAME   Appendix 10

CENTER NUMBER   L S S 1 4

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2

$\frac{30}{50} = 60\%$

0175/02

November 2022

2 HOURS

Candidates answer on the question paper.

Additional Materials: Insert

READ THESE INTRUCTIONS FIRST

- Write your name and centre number in the relevant spaces provided at the top of this paper.
- Write in dark or blue pen.
- Answer **ALL** questions.
- The insert contains two reading passage.
- Mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar may be penalised in any part of the paper.
- Dictionaries are not permitted in this examination.
- Do not use correction fluid.
- The number of marks is given in brackets [ ] at the end of each question or part question.

Passage 1 - Rabbit and Hares

1. Rabbits can be found throughout England and Wales in a range of habitats, including shrubby fields, arable land and pasture with hedgerows. Rabbits are also increasingly found in Suburban areas. Brown hares are also found throughout England and Wales, making their homes in arable farmland, shuttered grassy areas, hedgerows, pastures and woodland edges.

2. Besides looking alike, rabbits and hares share a number of attributes. Significantly, they are both prey animals that rely on speed and hiding to avoid or escape predators) Again, they can be seen standing on hind legs, using their fantastic, panoramic eyesight and long sensitive ears to warn them of danger) Both are active throughout the year. Also, they are nocturnal although they can be seen during the day (particularly rabbits in suburban areas)

3. Nutritionally too, these two species resemble each other. They are browsers that feed on grasses, leaves, heather, herbs, buds, twigs, field crops and sometimes tree bark and roots. In gardens, they are known to eat lettuce, cabbage, root vegetables and flowers. To cope with wear and tear of this duty their teeth grow continuously. Due to the low nutrient value of the diet, rabbits and hares have a unique digestive system called catastrophe, which involves eating their own faeces to extract all the nutrients they need.

4. Despite possessing the said similarities and belonging to the same order of mammals known as Lagomorphs, rabbits and hares are different species. In fact, they are different from the moment they are born. Baby rabbits-called kittens or bunnies- are born hairless and blind, totally dependent on their mothers. Baby hares - called leverets - are born with fur and sight, and they can move on their own within an hour of their birth.

5. Hares tend to be larger than rabbits, with longer hind legs and longer ears with black markings. While rabbits' fur stays the same colour year-round, hares change colour from brown or grey in the summer to white in winter. Whilst rabbits have beige fur and black skin.

6. In terms of habitation, too, there are clear lines of demarcation. Rabbits make their homes in barrows underground, while hares make nests above ground. Their different living habits make rabbits and hares respond to danger differently. Rabbits prefer to head underground and hide. Hares on the other hand, use the longer strong hind legs to run away from danger. Rabbits can be domesticated and kept as pets; hares stay wild.

7. Socially, hares are mostly solitary as opposed to rabbits which are very social, living in towns of up to 50. Individuals in large, complex barrows called warrens. (up to 3mm deep and 45 m long, some covering more than 2 acres.) Again, in contrast with hares, rabbits can breed at any time of the year.

8. Quite remarkably too, rabbits and hares are agricultural pests which should be controlled. Gardens and specific crops can be protected against rabbits and hares by using exclusion fencing) Repellent preparations) which are designed to render plants unpalatable and unattractive to browsing rabbits and hares could be another effective deterrent.

9. Rabbits will generally only inhibit suitable territory. Habitat changes) which make territory less desirable to a rabbit population will lead to reductions in the number of rabbits present in that territory. This is termed habitat manipulation and it can have a more permanent impact on rabbits than control methods such as poisoning. With regard to having control, there is hare coursing, the practice of chasing a hare with two dogs (usually greyhounds), which are shipped simultaneously from their leash. It is considered by some to be a competition and a test of a dog's skills. Being chased is extremely stressful for the hare and if caught it will die.

10. Night Shooting in particular, is an effective method of controlling hares and rabbit infestations. Night shooting involves searching for animal pests at night using a spotlight to locate pests while they are feeding, or are away from cover. Traps and snares, too, can be effective method in reducing rabbit numbers in urban gardens

11. In a nutshell, rabbits are similar to hares to a certain extent; but somehow different. Notwithstanding how different they may be, they belong to the same family and are agricultural pests, which should be controlled.

SECTION 1: Reading for Ideas

Read Passage 1 in the insert and answer all the questions below in the order set.

1.(a) Notes

Identify and write down the similarities and differences between rabbits and hares and ways to control them as pests.

USE THE MATERIAL FROM PARAGRAPH 2 TO PARAGRAPH 11 EXCLUSIVE.

At stage, you need **NOT** use your own words. To help you get started, the first one is done for you in each section of notes. You will be awarded up to 15 marks for content points.

Similarities

- Both species are prey animals that they rely on speed and hiding to avoid or escape predators.
- They Both can be seen standing on hind legs, using their fantastic, panoramic eyesight and long sensitive ears to warn them of danger
- Be Both species are nocturnal
- Both species nutritional they resemble each other,
- Both specie they are browsers that feed on grasses and roots
- Both species ba cope with wear and tear of this duty their teeth grow cont..
- Both species have a unique digesti... system called catastrophe...
-

Ways to control rabbits and hares as pest

- Exclusion fencing
- Repelled preparations
- Habitat changes
- night shooting
- Traps and snares
- hare Coursing

Differences

- Baby rabbits are born hairless and blind while baby hares are born with fur and sight.
- Hares tends to be larger than rabbits.
- rabbits' fur stays the same colour throughout a year while hares changes colour from brown in a summer to white in winter.
- Rabbits make their home in barrows underground while hares make nests above ground.
- Rabbits prefer to head underground and hide while hares use the longer strong hind legs to run away from danger.
- Rabbits ca be domesticated and kept as pets while hares stay wild Rabbits are social while hares are mostly solitary as opposed.

APPENDIX ELEVEN: Appendix 11 Sample script 2 for improved performance in summary in note form

62% C

LELTA

Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education

GRADE 10 B

CANDIDATE NAME   Appendix 11

CENTER NUMBER

ENGLISH LANGUAGE   0175/02

Paper 2   November 2022

                                                    2 HOURS

Candidates answer on the question paper.   31/50

Additional Materials: Insert

READ THESE INTRUCTIONS FIRST

- Write your name and centre number in the relevant spaces provided at the top of this paper.
- Write in dark or blue pen.
- Answer **ALL** questions.
- The insert contains two reading passage.
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- Do not use correction fluid.
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3. Nutritionally too, these two species resemble each other. They are browsers that feed on grasses, leaves, heather, herbs, buds, twigs, field crops and sometimes tree bark and roots. In gardens, they are known to eat lettuce, cabbage, root vegetables and flowers. To cope with wear and tear of this duty, their teeth grow continuously. Due to the low nutrient value of the diet, rabbits and hares have a unique digestive system called catastrophe, which involves eating their own faeces to extract all the nutrients they need.

4. Despite possessing the said similarities and belonging to the same order of mammals known as Lagomorphs, rabbits and hares are different species. In fact, they are different from the moment they are born. Baby rabbits, called kittens or bunnies are born hairless and blind, totally dependent on their mothers. Baby hares — called leverets — are born with fur and sight, and they can move on their own within an hour of their birth.

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7. Socially, hares are mostly solitary as opposed to rabbits which are very social, living in towns of up to 50. Individuals in large, complex barrows called warrens. (up to 3mm deep and 45 m long, some covering more than 2 acres.) Again in contrast with hares, rabbits can breed at any time of the year.

8. Quite remarkably too, rabbits and hares are agricultural pests which should be controlled. Gardens and specific crops can be protected against rabbits and hares by using exclusion fencing. Repellent preparations which are designed to render plants unpalatable and unattractive to browsing rabbits and hares could be another effective deterrent.

9. Rabbits will generally only inhibit suitable territory. Habitat changes which make territory less desirable to a rabbit population will lead to reductions in the number of rabbits present in that territory. This is termed habitat manipulation and it can have a more permanent impact on rabbits than control methods such as poisoning. With regard to having control, there is hare coursing, the practice of chasing a hare with two dogs usually greyhounds), which are shipped simultaneously from their leash. It is considered by some to be a competition and a test of a dog's skills. Being chased is extremely stressful for the hare and if caught it will die.

10. Night Shooting in particular, is an effective method of controlling hares and rabbit infestations. Night shooting involves searching for animal pests at night using a spotlight to locate pests while they are feeding, or are away from cover. Traps and snares too, can be effective method in reducing rabbit numbers in urban gardens

11. In a nutshell, rabbits are similar to hares to a certain extent; but somehow different. Notwithstanding how different they may be, they belong to the same family and are agricultural pests which should be controlled.

SECTION 1: Reading for Ideas

Read Passage 1 in the insert and answer all the questions below in the order set.

1.(a) Notes

Identify and write down the similarities and differences between rabbits and hares and ways to control them as pests.

USE THE MATERIAL FROM PARAGRAPH 2 TO PARAGRAPH 11 EXCLUSIVE.

At stage, you need **NOT** use your own words. To help you get started, the first one is done for you in each section of notes. You will be awarded up to 15 marks for content points.

Similarities

- Both species are prey animals that they rely on speed and hiding to avoid or escape predators.

- Rabbits and hares share a number of attributes

- They can be seen standing on ~~their~~ hind legs

- Both are active throughout the year

- They are nocturnal although they can be seen during the day

- These two species resemble each other

- They are browsers that feed on grasses

- ~~That~~ they are known to eat lettus

- Their teeth grow continuously

- Rabbits and ~~hairs~~ hares have a unique digestive system called catastrophe

6

Differences

- Baby rabbits are born hairless and blind while baby hares are born with fur and sight.
- Hares tend to be larger than rabbits.
- Rabbits' fur stays the same colour year-round, hares change colour from brown to white.
- Rabbits have beige fur and black skin.
- Rabbits make their homes underground while hares make nests above ground.
- Rabbits prefer to head underground and hide, hares on the other hand use the long strong hind legs to run away from danger.
- Rabbits can be domesticated and kept as pets, hares stay wild.
- hares are mostly solitary as compared to the rabbits.
- in contrast with hares, rabbits can breed at anytime of the year.

Ways to control rabbits and hares as pests

- Exclusion fencing
- Repellent preparations
- Habitant manipulation
- chasing a hare with two dogs
- Night shooting
- ~~If~~
- Traps and snares

5

APPENDIX TWELVE: Sample Script 3 For Improved Performance in Summary Note From

64% C

LELTA

Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education

GRADE 10 B

CANDIDATE NAME

Appendix 12

CENTER NUMBER

C L 9 9 9

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2

0175/02

November 2022

2 HOURS

$\frac{32}{50}$

Candidates answer on the question paper.

Additional Materials: Insert

READ THESE INTRUCTIONS FIRST

- Write your name and centre number in the relevant spaces provided at the top of this paper.
- Write in dark or blue pen.
- Answer **ALL** questions.
- The insert contains two reading passages
- Mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar may be penalised in any part of the paper.
- Dictionaries are not permitted in this examination.
- Do not use correction fluid.
- The number of marks is given in brackets [ ] at the end of each question or part question.

Passage 1 - Rabbit and Hares

1   Rabbits can be found throughout England and Wales in a range of habitats, including shrubby fields, arable land and pasture with hedgerows. Rabbits are also increasingly found in Suburban areas. Brown hares are also found throughout England and Wales, making their homes in arable farmland, shuttered grassy areas, hedgerows, pastures and woodland edges.

2   Besides looking alike, rabbits and hares share a number of attributes. Significantly, they are both prey animals that rely on speed and hiding to avoid or escape predators. Again, they can be seen standing on hind legs, using their fantastic, panoramic eyesight and long sensitive ears to warn them of danger. Both are active throughout the year. Also, they are nocturnal although they can be seen during the day (particularly rabbits in suburban areas)

3   Nutritionally too, these two species resemble each other. They are browsers that feed on grasses, leaves, heather, herbs, buds, twigs, field crops and sometimes tree bark and roots. In gardens, they are known to eat lettuce, cabbage, root vegetables and flowers. To cope with wear and tear of this duty their teeth grow continuously. Due to the low nutrient value of the diet, rabbits and hares have a unique digestive system called catastrophe, which involves eating their own faeces to extract all the nutrients they need.

4   Despite possessing the said similarities and belonging to the same order of mammals known as Lagomorphs, rabbits and hares are different species. In fact, they are different from the moment they are born. Baby rabbits-called kittens or bunnies- are born hairless and blind, totally dependent on their mothers. Baby hares - called leverets - are born with fur and sight, and they can move on their own within an hour of their birth.

5   Hares tend to be larger than rabbits, with longer hind legs and longer ears with black markings. While rabbits' fur stays the same colour year-round, hares change colour from brown or grey in the summer to white in winter. Whilst rabbits have beige fur and black skin.

6   In terms of habitation, too, there are clear lines of demarcation. Rabbits make their homes in barrows underground, while hares make nests above ground. Their different living habits make rabbits and hares respond to danger differently. Rabbits prefer to head underground and hide. Hares on the other hand, use the longer strong hind legs to run away from danger. Rabbits can be domesticated and kept as pets; hares stay wild.

7   Socially, hares are mostly solitary as opposed to rabbits which are very social, living in towns of up to 50. Individuals in large, complex barrows called warrens. (up to 3mm deep and 45 m long, some covering more than 2 acres.) Again, in contrast with hares, rabbits can breed at any time of the year.

8   Quite remarkably too, rabbits and hares are agricultural pests which should be controlled. Gardens and specific crops can be protected against rabbits and hares by using exclusion fencing. Repellent preparations which are designed to render plants unpalatable and unattractive to browsing rabbits and hares could be another effective deterrent.

9   Rabbits will generally only inhibit suitable territory. Habitat changes which make territory less desirable to a rabbit population will lead to reductions in the number of rabbits present in that territory. This is termed habitat manipulation and it can have a more permanent impact on rabbits than control methods such as poisoning. With regard to having control, there is hare coursing, the practice of chasing a hare with two dogs (usually greyhounds), which are shipped simultaneously from their leash. It is considered by some to be a competition and a test of a dog's skills. Being chased is extremely stressful for the hare and if caught it will die.

10 Night Shooting in particular, is an effective method of controlling hares and rabbit infestations. Night shooting involves searching for animal pests at night using a spotlight to locate pests while they are feeding, or are away from cover. Traps and snares, too, can be effective method in reducing rabbit numbers in urban gardens

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SECTION 1: Reading for Ideas

Read Passage 1 in the insert and answer all the questions below in the order set.

1.(a) Notes

Identify and write down the similarities and differences between rabbits and hares and ways to control them as pests.

USE THE MATERIAL FROM PARAGRAPH 2 TO PARAGRAPH 11 EXCLUSIVE.

At stage, you need **NOT** use your own words. To help you get started, the first one is done for you in each section of notes. You will be awarded up to 15 marks for content points.

Similarities
• Both species are prey animals that they rely on speed and hiding to avoid or escape predators.

• They can be seen standing on hind legs, using their fantastic, paranomic eyesight and long sensetive ears to warn them of danger.
• Both are active throughout the year.
• They are nocturnal although they can be seen during the day.
• They are browsers that feed on grasses, leaves, heather, herbs, buds, twigs, field crops and sometimes tree bark and roots.
• In gardens, they are known to eat lettuce, cabbage, root vegetables and flowers.
• Their teeth grow continuously
• Rabbits and hares have a unique digestive system called catastrophe.

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Differences

- Baby rabbits are born hairless and blind while baby hares are born with fur and sight.
- Hares tend to be larger than rabbits, with longer hind legs and longer ears with black markings while rabbits' fur stays
- Rabbits make their homes in burrows underground, while hares make nests above ground.
- Rabbits prefer to head underground and hide while hares use the longer strong hind legs to run away from danger.
- Rabbits can be domesticated and kept as pets while hares stay wild.
- Rabbits can breed at any time of the year.
- Hares are mostly solitary as opposed to rabbits which are very social.

5

Ways to control rabbits and hares as pests

- Exclusion fencing

5

- Repellent preparations which are designed to render plants unpalatable and unattractive to browsing rabbits and hares.
- Habitat changes which make territory less desirable.
- Hare coursing.
- Night shooting
- Traps and snares

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APPENDIX THIETEEN: SIMILARITY INDEX