

**EXPLORING LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS
INTENSIVE READING STRATEGY ON READING FOR
COMPREHENSION IN SELECTED SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN MAFETENG**

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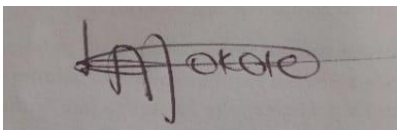
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Declaration

I, Lebohang Suzan Mokote, declare that:

1. The dissertation, “Exploring learners’ perceptions towards Intensive Reading Strategy in reading for comprehension in selected secondary schools in Mafeteng”, hereby submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Education (English Language Education), is my original work and has never been previously submitted for a qualification at this university or any other institution of higher education.
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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Makhotso and Mopule Mokote, who have been there since the beginning. Mom and Dad, thank you for your love and support. I am indeed grateful to you “batho ba moepeng.”

I dedicate this to my children, Bohlokoa, Kamo, and Letlotlo “Mummy bo ‘m'e ha ba kene sekolo”. That is not true, mummies go to school! And I set this standard for you guys. This further goes to my uncle, Pabala Maeketsa “Mofokeng ea matla ea sepheo”! I thank my siblings, Mamane and my friends. You were always there and I thank you for your prayers and support.

I thank me for believing in myself, making this dream come true! I truly believe in myself and I shall forever cherish my every move and effort, I thank myself for making it this far.

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Abstract

The school curriculum aims to equip learners with knowledge and skills required for successful livelihoods, emphasising work readiness and personal development. This qualitative study explored Grade 10 ESL learners' perceptions of the Intensive Reading Strategy (IRS) within the framework of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour and guided by Interpretivist Paradigm. Employing Inductive Thematic Analysis, six themes emerged: structured reading process, teacher as facilitator, assessment methods, learner attitudes, benefits and challenges of IRS. The findings indicate that IRS is most effective when implemented as a structured, interactive, and supportive multi-phase approach involving pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities. Learners generally hold positive attitudes towards IRS, recognising its role in vocabulary development, language proficiency, and reading confidence, though cognitive overload and emotional challenges such as anxiety can hinder engagement. The study underscores the importance of differentiated instruction and formative assessment to meet diverse learner needs and enhance motivation. Therefore, IRS shows significant potential for improving reading comprehension and language skills in Grade 10 ESL classrooms, with implications for effective, learner-centred reading instruction that addresses both cognitive and emotional dimensions.

Keywords: *Intensive Reading Strategy, reading comprehension, perceptions, Theory of Planned Behaviour*

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1	10
Introduction	10
1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....	10
Global reading challenges.....	17
Reading challenges in Lesotho.....	19
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	19
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	20
1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	20
CHAPTER 2	22
LITERATURE REVIEW	22
Introduction	22
2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW.....	22
2.1.1 Reading Comprehension.....	22
2.1.2 Intensive Reading Strategy (IRS) and Its Influence on Reading Comprehension.....	25
2.1.3 Implementation of Intensive Reading Strategy	26
2.1.4 Benefits and challenges of IRS	31
2.2 EMPIRICAL REVIEW	32
Implication of findings	38
2.3 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND APPLICATION.....	38
Summary.....	41
CHAPTER 3	42
METHODOLOGY	42
Introduction	42
3.1 PARADIGM	42
3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH	43
3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN	43
3.4 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS	44
44	
3.5 DATA GENERATION INSTRUMENTS	46
3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews.....	46
3.5.2 Document analysis.....	46
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS	48

Step1: Familiarisation with the data	49
Step 2: Generating Initial codes	49
Step3: Searching for Themes	50
Step 4: Reviewing Themes	50
Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes.....	50
Step 6: Producing the Report.....	50
3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS	51
3.7.1 Credibility	51
3.7.2 Transferability	51
3.7.3 Dependability.....	51
3.7.4 Confirmability.....	51
3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	52
CHAPTER 4	53
PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF	53
FINDINGS.....	53
Introduction	53
4.1 DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	53
4.1.1 Initial coding.....	54
4.1.2 Theme 1: Structured reading process.....	56
Sub-theme 1.1: Pre-reading Phase	56
Sub-theme 1.2: While-reading Phase	57
Sub-theme 1.3: Vocabulary Development.....	57
Sub-theme 1.4: Prior Knowledge	58
Sub-theme 1.5:Post-reading Phase.....	58
4.1.3 Theme 2: Teacher as facilitator.....	59
4.1.4 Theme 3: Assessment methods	61
Comparison between teaching methods.....	62
4.1.5 Theme 4: Learner Attitudes	64
4.1.6 Theme 5: Benefits of IRS	66
4.1.7 Theme 6: Challenges of IRS.....	67
Summary	69
CHAPTER 5	70
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND.....	70

RECOMMENDATIONS	70
Introduction	70
5.1 SUMMARY	70
5.1.1 An overview on how the research questions were answered based on the literature and findings.....	70
5.1.2 How is Intensive Reading Strategy implemented in Grade 10 ESL classrooms and what practices are employed for learners' engagement and comprehension?	70
5.1.3 How do Grade 10 ESL learners perceive Intensive Reading Strategy?	71
5.1.4 How do Grade 10 ESL learners perceive the role of their teachers in facilitating the implementation of Intensive Reading Strategy?	72
5.1.5 What benefits do Grade 10 ESL learners get and what challenges do they face in adopting Intensive Reading Strategy?.....	72
5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	73
5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	73
5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	74
5.5 CONCLUSION.....	75
REFERENCES	77
APPENDICES	91
Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview	91
Appendix 2: Document analysis.....	92
Appendix 3: Proof of editing	93
Appendix 4: Turnitin™ report	94

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter introduces the study on learners' perceptions towards intensive reading strategy on reading for comprehension in Lesotho. It highlights the importance of reading as a foundational skill for academic success and personal development, while addressing the challenges ESL learners face, such as limited exposure to English and inadequate teaching strategies. The chapter outlines the research objectives and questions, focusing on how learners perceive intensive reading strategy on reading for comprehension and engagement among Grade 10 learners. It also discusses the significance of the study, emphasising its potential contribution to educational practices and literacy plans in Lesotho.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The school curriculum aims to equip learners with knowledge and skills required for successful living, emphasising lifelong learning, work readiness and personal development (Akhtar, 2018; Moea, 2023). Lesotho's Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP), 2009 was developed in response to long-standing concerns about the relevance of the school curriculum and authenticity of public examinations, which have been criticised for failing to measure learners' competencies and skills (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). To address these concerns, the policy aimed to integrate curriculum and assessment to ease the negative impact of examinations on Lesotho's education system (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). CAP seeks to promote an educational system that supports the country's basic objectives of socio-economic development and citizen empowerment. Its primary

goals include equipping learners with the intellectual and practical skills they need to succeed in a world that is changing rapidly Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), (2009).

CAP places a strong emphasis on language and its usage- speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, and development of critical thinking among learners (MoET, 2009). It further prioritises reading as the foundational skill for academic achievement across all other learning areas and emphasises the development of language proficiency as a core component of education (MoET, 2021). Moreover, the policy advocates for a learner-centred approach, which encourages active participation and engagement in the learning process (MoET, 2009). Therefore, this approach is particularly relevant for reading for comprehension, as it allows learners to interact with texts in meaningful ways, fostering deeper understanding and retention.

The Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) English curriculum is designed to align with the CAP, which integrates Linguistic and Literary Education with broader developmental goals, including developing lifelong learning, proficiency in English usage, critical thinking and cultural awareness (MoET, 2009). The curriculum also aims to foster higher-order thinking skills, including critical reading, comprehension and language skills that are critical for academic success and effective communication (MoET, 2009). This aligns with CAP, which states that learners should have acquired the communication skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing at the completion of basic education (MoET, 2009). The LGCSE English curriculum plays a significant role in developing literacy, which goes beyond basic reading and writing; it involves critical thinking, analysis and ability to interpret information. The learning outcomes formulated cover the 21-st century skills needed in the industrial era, which cultivate the higher-order thinking skills including communication, collaboration, critical thinking, computational logic and civic responsibility (Bozer et al., 2019).

Additionally, the LGCSE English curriculum incorporates learner-centred approaches, encouraging creativity and independent thinking, and balances linguistic proficiency with literary analysis, aiming to produce skilled learners who are capable of engaging with texts and societal issues (MoET, 2009). Moreover, the LGCSE English curriculum comprises a specific focus on reading as a key component of language acquisition and literacy development, and highlights the importance of reading for comprehension by integrating guided reading activities, analytical tasks, and comprehension-based assessments that promote active engagement with texts (MoET, 2009).

Additionally, the curriculum outlines various intensive reading strategies, including summarising, skimming, scanning and intensive reading, which involve close reading of texts to enhance comprehension and critical analysis (MoET, 2009).

The Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy (LBECP), 2021 was introduced as a response to the gaps identified in the CAP and the evolving educational and societal needs of the country (MoET, 2021). LBECP intends to respond to the 21st century demands and global education trends by integrating digital literacy, life skills, and entrepreneurship into the curriculum, equipping learners with tools necessary to navigate the modern world (MoET, 2021). This policy prioritises reading as the foundational skill necessary for academic achievement across all other learning areas and emphasises the development of language proficiency as a core component of education (MoET, 2021). The policy is closely aligned to the LGCSE English curriculum in the quest to foster higher-order thinking skills, including critical reading, comprehension and language skills that are critical for academic success and effective communication (MoET, 2021). This aligns with CAP, which states that learners should have acquired the communication skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing at the completion of basic education (MoET, 2009). LBECP also highlights the need for effective teaching strategies that cater to diverse learning needs, including the use of intensive reading strategy to support English Language learners (MoET, 2021).

Both LBECP and CAP share the goal of promoting accessible, relevant, high-quality, and inclusive education in Lesotho and are driven by the need to improve learners' knowledge, skills, and competences in order to address socio-economic and technical challenges while maintaining moral and cultural values. Additionally, the policies prioritise the integration of curriculum and assessment to create a comprehensive education system that prepares learners for lifelong learning and involvement in the country's socio-economic development. Furthermore, both policies attempt to improve the curriculum by including technical and vocational training with academic instruction in order to promote entrepreneurship and employment (MoET, 2009; 2021).

The education system in Lesotho, as with many countries where English is a second language, recognises the critical role of English in academic, social, and professional spheres. According to Khati and Khati (2009), English has been in existence as a second language in Lesotho since the nineteenth century. English as second language plays a vital role in educational policy, facilitating access to global information, commerce, and media, distinguishing it from a foreign language due

to its use in the local context (Khathi & Khathi, 2009). Moreover, the country's colonial history has established English as a language of administration, education, and commerce (Kamwangamalu & Moyo, 2003). Consequently, English is not only a subject but also a vital tool for accessing knowledge across various disciplines (Makoa, 2015). However, the status of English as a second language presents unique challenges for learners, as many learners come from homes where English is not spoken (Ekanjume-Illongo, 2015). This linguistic context necessitates the implementation of effective language teaching strategies that can bridge the gap between learners' native language and English, particularly in reading, which is central to second language acquisition.

Lesotho's education system faces significant challenges related to language policy and its implementation. One of the major issues highlighted in the LBECP is the ambiguity in policy statements regarding the use of mother tongue in education (MoET, 2021). Despite the fact that Lesotho is home to diverse linguistic groups, only Sesotho is recognised as the mother tongue in practice, marginalising the minority languages (Nquni languages) including siPhuthi, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and Sign language (MoET, 2021). This interpretation has led to difficulties in ensuring that all learners receive instruction in a language they fully understand in the early years of education. CAP emphasises that learners must acquire proficiency in English to succeed academically and function effectively in the wider world (MoET, 2009). According to the Lesotho Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), 2016 and the National Language Policy, 2010, the country's educational framework emphasises the importance of English language proficiency as a critical factor in improving learning outcomes, particularly reading and writing, to ensure that learners can engage with academic content, enhance their critical thinking, and succeed in English-medium instruction (MoET, 2016; 2010).

However, teaching English in Lesotho, particularly reading, presents unique challenges; learners struggle to connect with texts due to insufficient cognitive skills and concepts (Moea, 2023). English is a second language for most learners, and there is often a significant gap in proficiency between learners' first language and English (Moea, 2023). Reading is a cognitive process that involves decoding words, comprehending meaning, interpreting and analysing text and engaging in an active response (Nordquist, 2019). Reading requires learners to engage with texts deeply and critically, making it a cornerstone for language development (Nordquist, 2019). Intensive reading,

which involves close examination of shorter texts with a focus on understanding intricate details such as vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar is a vital strategy for improving reading for comprehension and language proficiency (Cardenas, 2020). This approach may allow ESL learners to engage deeply with the language, making it an essential tool for building linguistic accuracy and fluency (Cardenas, 2020).

In the context of Lesotho's ESL curriculum, reading is a key skill to literacy, academic success and personal development (Honigsfeld, 2019). Murray (2016) asserts that reading plays an instrumental role in the acquisition of language; it helps learners to develop language skills including vocabulary and grammatical structures. In Lesotho, English is a core subject and a medium of instruction in schools from grade four to tertiary (MoET, 2009). This dual role underscores the importance of developing strong reading skills to facilitate comprehension across subjects. Therefore, proficiency in reading becomes fundamental for understanding other subjects, especially in secondary education (MoET, 2009).

Therefore, the classification of English as both a core subject and medium of instruction highlights the necessity for effective teaching strategies and assessments to enhance learners' proficiency, particularly in reading for comprehension (MoET, 2009). In a similar vein, Moea (2023) highlights the need for effective instructional strategies to improve comprehension and strategy awareness among ESL learners. Despite the importance of English, many learners face challenges in reading due to limited exposure to the language outside the classroom and varying levels of proficiency (UNICEF Lesotho & MoET, 2021). However, MoET (2009) emphasises the need for a balanced approach to language instruction, integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to equip learners with the competencies necessary for navigating both local and global contexts.

The development of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing are interconnected in the process of language acquisition. Anderson (2008) highlighted that these skills are interdependent, meaning that a deficiency in one area can hinder progress in the others. While speaking and writing are productive skills and listening and reading are receptive skills, all four are essential for fluency. Research has shown that reading forms the foundation upon which the other skills are developed. Brown (2014) posits that foundation skills are reading skills that learners develop in primary grades and serve as a base for later competence and proficiency. In addition, Hicks (2023) states that reading is the foundation through which learners will acquire

knowledge, encounter diverse perspectives, and develop critical thinking skills. Cunningham and Stanovichs (2001) found that learners who engage regularly with reading tend to develop stronger vocabulary, enhanced cognitive abilities, and better fluency in speaking and writing.

In Lesotho, where learners struggle to transition from their first language to English, fostering strong reading skills is critical not only for language development but also for academic achievement in various subjects (Likhoeli, 2020). CAP emphasises the need for learners to develop their English skills to a level where they not only understand academic content but also engage in higher-order thinking (MoET, 2009). Given that English is a second language for many, intensive reading strategy becomes crucial for achieving academic reading comprehension skills. This strategy focuses on smaller sections of text allowing learners to explore language in detail, including vocabulary, grammar, and meaning (Park, 2017). Intensive reading strategy plays an important role in bridging the gap between spoken language proficiency and academic language proficiency, especially for learners who face challenges in acquiring English as a second language (Park, 2017).

Intensive reading strategy, characterised by focused engagement with texts to achieve deep comprehension, is widely regarded as an effective method for improving reading skills, particularly in second language acquisition (Mart, 2015). This approach requires learners to engage carefully with texts, analysing vocabulary, syntax, and meaning to derive both literal and inferential understanding (Mart, 2015). Given its structured nature, learners' perceptions of this strategy significantly influence their willingness to adopt it and its eventual effectiveness. Learners' perceptions of the relevance of intensive reading strategy to their academic success can vary. Some learners may see it as a necessary skill for passing exams, while others may appreciate its broader applications in accessing information and enhancing their knowledge (Mep, 2017).

Widyaasita et al. (2020) conducted a study that explored learners' perceptions towards the lecturer's instruction in teaching reading through intensive reading strategy, and the study findings revealed that learners perceived IRS as a valuable method for enhancing their language skills, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and comprehension. Furthermore, Widyaasita et al. (2020) assert that learners expressed a positive perception of their teachers' instructional methods in teaching IRS. This implies that learners felt that their teachers effectively delivered the material, facilitated their understanding of complex language elements such as context, tenses, idioms and

proverbs. Therefore, the attitudes of teacher or peers can also affect learners' perceptions of IRS (Mep, 2017). For instance, if learners observe their classmates benefiting from intensive reading, they may be more inclined to adopt the strategy themselves. Many learners report that by scrutinising texts closely, they develop a stronger grasp of content, allowing them to extract key ideas more effectively (Mart, 2015). Brown (2017) supports this view, emphasising that intensive reading strategy enables learners to decode individual words while simultaneously connecting them to broader contextual meanings.

In addition, learners who engage in this method find that their ability to understand complex passages improves over time, making academic texts more accessible (Alyousef, 2015). However, many learners find this strategy time-consuming and mentally taxing, particularly when dealing with linguistically dense material (Alyousef, 2015). Pressley (2002) observes that learners with reading difficulties experience frustration because they struggle with word recognition and inferential comprehension. Additionally, some learners perceive intensive reading strategy as overly mechanical, preferring more interactive or extensive reading approaches where meaning takes precedence over minute detail.

Reading, in particular, is vital for ESL learners, as it is the primary source of language input outside of direct instruction (Roberts et al., 2019). According to Murray (2016), reading helps learners to develop their language skills by exposing them to language in context, enabling them to acquire vocabulary, understand grammatical structures, and improve their cognitive processing abilities. In Lesotho, where English proficiency is a key determinant of academic success, reading is not just an academic requirement but also a means of accessing knowledge across all subjects. Khazaal (2019) emphasises that intensive reading strategy is effective for vocabulary acquisition, as learners encounter words in context and retain them more effectively. The integration of intensive reading strategy in the classroom ensures that learners not only understand the meaning of texts but also internalise the language used in academic settings (Andres, 2020).

Lesotho's education policy mandates that learners must achieve proficiency in English to participate fully in the global economy and contribute to the country's development (MoET, 2009). Therefore, the LGCSE English curriculum focuses heavily on language skills, particularly reading and writing. This focus on reading aligns with the country's educational objectives of improving literacy, fostering academic achievement, and preparing learners for the demands of a globalised

world. Intensive reading strategy is crucial for achieving these objectives, as they enable learners to break down complex texts, understand linguistic structures, and build the skills necessary to succeed in English-medium instruction (Khazaal, 2019).

Furthermore, the implementation of intensive reading strategy aligns with Lesotho's broader educational goals outlined in the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) (MoET, 2021). The strategy outlines the country's priorities for improving education. The ESSP addresses key challenges including English language proficiency, teacher training, curriculum development and learners' learning outcomes. This emphasises the need for learners to acquire not just basic language skills but also the higher-level cognitive and analytical skills necessary for success in a globalised world (MoET, 2016). Through the intensive reading strategy, ESL learners can engage critically with texts, analyse content, and improve their overall academic performance. This approach may enhance their ability to apply English effectively in both academic and real-world contexts, ultimately contributing to their success in higher education and professional spheres.

Global reading challenges

Reading ability has been a main area of struggle for English as a second language (ESL) learners universally and countries that practise English as a second language often face the most challenges in reading for comprehension (Mohammad, 2021). Accordingly, Program for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2022) results highlighted disparities in reading proficiency across different countries. The report showed that there was an extraordinary drop in performance in reading, which illustrates that 60% of learners aged 15 years in 18 countries struggle to interpret simple texts. In support, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Report (UNICEF, 2022), indicated that only 36% of 10-year-olds globally are estimated to be able to read and understand a written story while the rest 64%, are unable to cover this marker for minimum proficiency in reading for comprehension.

The reading problem is a concern not just in developing countries but in a number of developed countries as well. The global literacy rate of 86% means that 774 million people in the world lack basic reading skills, with the vast majority living in developing regions including South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, which have the lowest literacy rates for children and adults (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2017). In the United States, approximately 40% of learners across the nation cannot read at the basic level (UIS, 2017). As per The Department of Education, the United

Kingdom seemingly faces similar problems with 1 in 5 children not being able to read by the age of 11 (Rimi, 2022). Moreover, the Global Educate Update states that nearly 9 in 10 learners in Sub-Saharan Africa are unable to read and understand a simple text by the age of 10, and, globally, 70% (up from 57% before the COVID- 19 pandemic cannot read, (Kwankwa, 2023).

Moreover, Costa (2019) posits that India does not designate any language as a national language but recognises 22 official languages including English, which serves as a lingua franca. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2023), India is home to the prevalent illiterate population in the world and faces a vast reading and literacy crisis with about 287 million people who are unable to read and write. India's literacy rate is about 74%, leaving a quarter of the population without basic reading and writing skills. In India, ESL learners experience problems with reading accuracy and comprehension due to language exposure variations. Thus, learners in India encounter problems with inference questions in reading tests, often stemming from vocabulary and sentence structure deficiencies.

Moreover, according to Kiew and Shah (2021), it has been reported in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) that Malaysian learners face several challenges in reading, particularly among ESL learners despite early exposure to English from pre-school. English is taught as a compulsory subject throughout primary and secondary education and only 27.2 % of learners demonstrate adequate literacy skills. Reports indicate that 162,000 learners are illiterate, specifying vocabulary, grammar complexity and ineffective teaching strategies as major factors that contribute to these challenges; this may be linked to inadequate reading strategies as well as lack of reading habits.

This condition also exists in South Africa as the country is seen grappling with a severe literacy crisis and, according to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2021), literacy emergency is deepening in SA. The said report indicates that 81% of Grade 4 learners could not read for meaning in any language, which shows a sign of low performance levels on learners' ability to read. These alarming statistics underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions and collaborative efforts to equip all learners with the foundational literacy skills essential for academic achievement and lifelong success. According to Fengu (2024), the alarming predictions indicate that 69 % of 10-year-old learners in SA will be unable to read for meaning in

two years' time, thereby calling for urgent interventions. For that reason, this study focuses on intensive reading strategy to promote learners' comprehension.

Reading challenges in Lesotho

Lesotho faces significant reading challenges which are deeply rooted in its broader educational crisis (UNESCO, 2021). Learning outcomes, including foundational and numeracy skills, for both primary and secondary learners, are poor in Lesotho (MoET, 2024). The literacy crisis is high with 97% of learners unable to read and understand an age-appropriate text by age 10. This issue stems from factors including limited vocabulary among learners, limited access to reading materials, insufficient exposure to effective reading strategies and linguistic barriers, (UNESCO, 2021). Additionally, according to the Lesotho National Assessment of Educational Progress Sample (NAEP), only 45% of learners aged 7 to 14 demonstrate reading proficiency in English or Sesotho, and foundational literacy skills have further deteriorated due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related school closures (ECOL, 2021). According to Tlali (2016), learners with substantial reading difficulties struggle to understand material taught, which can hinder their overall academic performance and limit their success in various opportunities.

Further, the examiner's report of 2023 highlights major challenges in reading for comprehension among learners, particularly in areas requiring deeper understanding, vocabulary knowledge and inferential skills (ECOL, 2023). The decline in performance shows lack of comprehension and guidance, and the examiner's recommendations urged learners to read widely in order to improve vocabulary and critical thinking skills. Thus, the primary focus of this study is to explore the influence of intensive reading strategy in ESL learners in selected secondary schools.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the emphasis on learner-centred education and the integration of intensive reading strategy in the LGCSE English Language syllabus, learners seemingly continue to struggle with critical comprehension skills such as inferring meaning, identifying main ideas and applying knowledge across different contexts (ECOL, 2021; 2022; 2023). While some studies suggest that intensive reading strategy can improve vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension (Khazaal, 2019; Andres, 2020), there is lack of literature on exploring the intensive reading strategy in the context of ESL learners in Lesotho. The shortage of focused research on intensive reading strategy limits

understanding of how this approach could support language acquisition and improve reading proficiency. The persistent poor performance of ESL learners in reading comprehension seemingly indicates a discrepancy between the syllabus and classroom practice and it is unclear whether teachers understand and apply this strategy effectively, or if learners engage with intensive reading strategy meaningfully.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How is Intensive Reading Strategy implemented in Grade 10 ESL classrooms and what practices are employed for learners' engagement and comprehension?
- How do Grade 10 ESL learners perceive Intensive Reading Strategy?
- How do Grade 10 ESL learners perceive the role of their teachers in facilitating the implementation of Intensive Reading Strategy?
- What benefits do Grade 10 ESL learners get and what challenges do they face in adopting Intensive Reading Strategy?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study may provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of intensive reading strategies in the field of language education, specifically aimed at enhancing the reading experience for ESL learners. By demonstrating how these strategies can improve comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and engagement, the research may contribute to the academic discourse surrounding effective language instruction. The findings may not only enrich the existing literature but also serve as a foundation for future studies exploring innovative approaches to reading instruction in diverse educational contexts.

Academically, this study may sensitise teachers to effective reading techniques and instructional strategies that may be integrated into their teaching practices. By equipping teachers with evidence-based approaches tailored to the needs of ESL learners, the research may enhance instructional effectiveness and foster a supportive learning environment. This, in turn, may lead to improved learner outcomes in reading comprehension and overall language proficiency, thereby contributing to the academic success of learners. Socially, the study has the potential to promote a culture of reading within the community by highlighting the importance of literacy as a foundational skill for personal and professional development.

On a personal level, this study will hopefully enhance my expertise in English Language education, equipping me with advanced knowledge and skills. This will ideally improve my teaching practices and potentially make me a specialist in my field. Furthermore, this study may empower ESL learners by enhancing their reading skills and boosting their confidence in using the English language. Improved reading comprehension can lead to greater academic achievement, increased self-esteem, and a more profound appreciation for literature and learning. Thus, as learners become proficient readers, they are likely to develop critical thinking skills that will serve them well beyond the classroom, enabling them to engage more effectively with the world around them.

Moreover, this study may enhance the effectiveness of the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) by addressing resource allocation issues and improving access to relevant reading materials. By identifying gaps in available resources and recommending targeted interventions, the research may contribute to more equitable access to reading materials for all learners, particularly those who rely solely on school-provided resources. This could lead to better educational outcomes in reading for comprehension, especially for learners who currently face barriers to accessing diverse and engaging reading materials outside of the classroom.

Summary

This chapter provided the study's overview and background. Additionally, research objectives, questions, and statement of the problem outlining problems that led to this study were presented. The significance of the study was also outlined. This chapter further laid the foundation for the subsequent chapter which reviews the related literature.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental task that enables learners to decode and comprehend texts, facilitating the acquisition of knowledge and information (Barlett & Gorney, 2010). Based on the ideas of Sharma et al. (2017), mastery of reading for meaning is essential for ESL learners, as it involves connecting textual messages to personal experiences. This chapter reviews literature on intensive reading strategy (IRS) aimed at enhancing reading comprehension in ESL contexts, with a particular emphasis on foregrounding the intricate relationship between reading comprehension and IRS. Reading comprehension serves as the foundational skill that IRS builds upon and strengthens, enabling learners to not only decode texts but also interpret, analyze, and internalise their meanings. Effective instructional methods, such as IRS, are crucial for supporting ESL learners in overcoming comprehension barriers and achieving deeper engagement with written texts. By first establishing the core components and importance of reading comprehension, this review then explores how IRS directly influences and enhances this skill, highlighting their symbiotic relationship in promoting academic success.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.1.1 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a vital skill that promotes the acquisition of other language skills, including writing, speaking, and listening. It encompasses the ability to read a text, define words, and generate and understand meaning (Shea, 2017). Furthermore, it requires learners to comprehend the nature of sentences using their own words. Thus, reading comprehension is a tool for developing critical thinking skills, which are essential for academic success and engagement with complex texts (Mehmood, 2018). The incorporation of reading comprehension into the English Language syllabus offers numerous benefits and serves as a cornerstone of ESL learning. Alyousef (2015) ranks reading comprehension as one of the most important skills for academic

and professional success in general, and in second and foreign language education in particular. This approach includes understanding a text's vocabulary, knowledge of the subject matter, and comprehension of its language structures (Mullis & Martin, 2019).

Reading comprehension is a multifaceted skill that encompasses several competencies, including phonics, phonemic awareness, decoding, language comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and background knowledge (Murray, 2016). Each of these components plays a crucial role in enabling learners to understand and engage with texts effectively.

Phonics is the method of teaching reading that emphasises the relationship between letters and sounds. It is a critical component of early reading instruction, as it helps learners decode words by understanding how letters combine to form sounds (National Reading Panel, 2000). Phonics instruction enables learners to develop the skills necessary for reading unfamiliar words, thereby enhancing their overall reading proficiency (Ehri, 2020).

Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognise and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. This skill is foundational for developing decoding abilities and is essential for effective reading instruction (Adams, 1990). Phonemic awareness activities, such as rhyming, segmenting, and blending sounds, help learners understand the sound structure of language, which is fundamental for successful reading and comprehension.

Decoding is the ability to translate written words into their spoken forms, which involves understanding the relationships between letters and sounds. This process is essential for extracting meaning from complex information (Castles et al., 2018). Decoding includes the acquisition of letter group patterns and the development of skills to articulate new words. Phonological processing is integral to this developmental stage, facilitating learners' comprehension of words and sentences (Layes et al., 2015). Effective decoding is foundational for other reading skills, such as fluency, vocabulary, and overall reading comprehension. Successful decoding occurs when learners use their knowledge of letter-sound relationships to read words accurately, which ultimately leads to a better understanding of the text.

Language comprehension refers to the ability to derive meaning from words, sentences, and texts in both spoken and written forms (Murray, 2016). This complex skill requires the simultaneous integration of various types of information, including knowledge of letters and sounds, spelling,

grammar, word meanings, and general knowledge. Cognitive abilities such as attention monitoring, inferencing, and memory retrieval are also essential for organising this information into a coherent understanding (Murray, 2016). As learners interpret texts, they must strategically apply their background knowledge, vocabulary, and understanding of language structures to create meaningful representations (Snow, 2002).

Fluency is the ability to read with accuracy, speed, expression, and comprehension (Rasinski, 2006). Fluent readers can automatically recognise words and group them quickly, allowing them to focus on the meaning of the text rather than the mechanics of decoding. This fluency not only enhances comprehension but also positively influences learners' motivation to read. When learners struggle with fluency, they may find reading less enjoyable, leading to decreased practice and potential declines in their reading skills.

Vocabulary knowledge plays a critical role in reading comprehension as it directly influences a reader's ability to understand and engage with texts. Anderson and Freebody (1981) identified vocabulary as a robust predictor of reading success, suggesting that a well-developed vocabulary enables readers to make connections and infer meanings, thereby enhancing their overall comprehension. It encompasses the body of words that individuals know and is critical to the reading process (McKeown, 2019). McKeown (2019) emphasises the importance of effective vocabulary instruction, arguing that it can enhance comprehension skills across various educational contexts. McKeown (2019) suggests that vocabulary teaching should focus on deepening learners' understanding of word meanings, which leads to improved reading outcomes.

Similarly, Ma et al. (2015) discuss the integral role of vocabulary knowledge in supporting text comprehension. Ma et al. (2015) argue that vocabulary is essential not only for reading but also for broader learning experiences throughout the school day. In addition, Ma et al. (2015) advocate for strategies that promote active engagement with words, which can foster better comprehension skills among learners. Analysing and synthesising words, sentences, and ideas are essential for reading comprehension (Ma et al., 2015). Learners cannot fully grasp what they are reading without knowing the meanings of most words (Anderson & Freebody, 1981). This suggests that as learners encounter more texts, they must continually expand their vocabulary to include new words that may not be part of their oral language.

Background knowledge refers to the information that learners already possess about a topic before they begin reading (Smith, 2021). This knowledge includes vocabulary, facts, and conceptual understanding. Background knowledge provides a structured framework for integrating new information from the text and serves as a resource for making inferences (Smith et al., 2021). Learners with extensive background knowledge can process information more quickly, retain it better, and understand it at a deeper level, while also effectively filtering out irrelevant details (Hinckley, 2024).

Learners who struggle with reading comprehension often face challenges related to decoding, loss of concentration, and difficulties in understanding the meanings of specific words, both in isolation and within sentences. According to Nation (2019), effective reading involves comprehension skills and overall understanding. While many individuals perceive reading as a basic skill acquired in elementary school, it encompasses much more than merely pronouncing words correctly. Reading strategies are specific procedures designed to assist learners in interpreting the meaning of printed words, playing a crucial role in developing comprehension skills (Arden, 2021). One effective approach to improving secondary learners' reading achievement—and addressing these challenges, is through targeted interventions that build on these foundational components (Baker et al., 2014).

2.1.2 Intensive Reading Strategy (IRS) and Its Influence on Reading Comprehension

Intensive Reading Strategy (IRS) plays a crucial role in enhancing reading comprehension skills, which are essential for effective language learning, particularly in English as a Second Language (ESL). IRS directly targets the core components of reading comprehension—such as decoding, vocabulary, fluency, and background knowledge—by promoting deeper engagement with texts, thereby forging a strong relationship between the strategy and comprehension outcomes. IRS significantly enhances reading comprehension by promoting a deeper understanding of texts. According to Khazaal (2019), IRS involves detailed reading with specific learning goals, which encourages learners to engage with the material at a profound level. This approach not only aids in improving comprehension but also enhances fluency, vocabulary, spelling, and overall confidence in reading (Baker et al., 2014). Taembo (2023) emphasises that IRS fosters the ability to identify main ideas and make inferences, which are critical components of effective reading comprehension. Furthermore, Ali (2019) notes that learners can extract explicit information, integrate ideas, and critically evaluate content, thereby enhancing their overall comprehension

skills. This type of reading requires attention and focus to fully comprehend the meaning of a text (Andres, 2020). By emphasising these aspects, learners engage in reading with clear objectives, making IRS an important tool to enhance ESL learners' reading comprehension.

Moreover, IRS enhances grammar and vocabulary, thereby improving other language skills (Yin, 2015). Hidayat (2023) asserts that IRS focuses on grammatical forms and the context of a text, helping learners acquire new vocabulary and promoting critical thinking. Similarly, Zhang (2020) notes that IRS enhances language skills and literacy. Ali (2019) confirms that as learners are guided to read, they extract explicit information, make inferences, integrate ideas, and critically evaluate content. Therefore, this study aims to demonstrate how IRS can enhance reading comprehension skills through fostering a thorough understanding of a text's structure and meaning, as well as developing essential reading processes. In essence, IRS acts as a scaffold that amplifies the foundational elements of reading comprehension, enabling ESL learners to transition from surface-level decoding to higher-order interpretation and critical analysis.

2.1.3 Implementation of Intensive Reading Strategy

In the realm of reading instruction, implementation of IRS has garnered significant attention for its potential to enhance reading comprehension and language skills. Successful implementation of IRS requires a structured approach that incorporates various interactive and supportive structures (Ali, 2022). One effective approach is to utilise pre-reading activities that prepare learners for the text (Paran, 2003). Pre-reading activities serve as foundational steps in the IRS framework. They are designed to activate prior knowledge, introduce key vocabulary, and set a purpose for reading (Agbevivi & Adogpa, 2022). For instance, teachers can encourage learners to preview the material by skimming headings and images, which allows learners to form predictions about the text, thereby enhancing their engagement (Saj, 2021). This preparatory phase is important as it helps learners approach the text with a focused mindset, ultimately improving their comprehension (Nation & Macalister, 2020).

In contrast, some teachers may argue that pre-reading activities can be time-consuming and may detract from the actual reading experience. Critics suggest that learners should dive directly into the text to develop their skills in navigating complex materials. However, Ali (2022) indicates that without proper preparation, learners may struggle to grasp the content, leading to frustration and disengagement. Thus, while the argument against pre-reading activities highlights efficiency, it

overlooks the significance of activating prior knowledge and setting a purpose for reading. However, teachers can activate prior knowledge by facilitating brainstorming sessions or discussions that connect the text to learners' existing experiences, using warm-up questions or vocabulary preview exercises to spark interest (Dickson, 2022).

During the reading process, various interactive instructional techniques can be incorporated to enhance engagement and comprehension. The Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) and the Know, Want, and Learn (K-W-L) chart are two prominent strategies that promote active engagement (Apriliana, 2022; Hassard & Dias, 2013). The DRTA method encourages learners to make predictions, confirm or refute those predictions during reading, and reflect on their understanding afterwards, fostering critical thinking (Apriliana, 2022). Conversely, the K-W-L strategy allows learners to articulate their prior knowledge, set learning goals, and reflect on what they have learned (Hassard & Dias, 2013). The DRTA is more focused on prediction and reflection, while it is argued that the K-W-L strategy may lead to superficial engagement if learners do not take the time to reflect meaningfully on their learning (Pressley, 2002). However, proponents argue that the K-W-L strategy encourages learners to take ownership of their learning, making it a valuable tool in the IRS framework.

Additionally, facilitating peer discussions in small groups allows learners to share their interpretations and learn from one another, clarifying their understanding in a collaborative setting (Hidayat et al., 2023). Implementing reciprocal teaching can also be beneficial. This collaborative reading strategy involves learners taking turns leading discussions about the text, where they predict, clarify, question, and summarise (Alfassi et al., 2009). Such dialogues promote peer interaction and help learners become active participants in their learning, ultimately improving their comprehension skills (Kula, 2021). Selecting diverse and relevant reading materials is essential for maintaining learners' interest. Teachers should provide a range of texts that are culturally relevant and aligned with learners' interests and cognitive levels (Murray et al., 2020). Incorporating visual aids such as images, charts, and videos can further enhance understanding and engagement by making complex concepts more accessible (Sharma, 2024).

During the after-reading phase, it is important to encourage reflection and evaluation. Post-reading activities are essential for consolidating learning and assessing comprehension. They provide opportunities for learners to reflect, discuss their interpretations, and apply their new knowledge

(Setiyorini et al., 2022). Common comprehension post-reading activities include comprehension questions, summarising, and engaging in discussions about the text (Puspitasari et al., 2024). The assessment of reading comprehension is a central component of effective literacy instruction, as it provides teachers with the necessary insight into learners' strengths, needs, and overall progress (Behring & Laitusis, 2022). In practice, reading comprehension is assessed through a variety of methods that differ in purpose, timing, and instructional implications (Cain, 2013). Diagnostic assessments, administered prior to instruction, identify gaps in foundational knowledge that may hinder progress (Behring & Laitusis, 2022). These are valuable in detecting whether difficulties stem from decoding issues or higher-level comprehension challenges (Hougen & Smartt, 2012). For instance, if a learner demonstrates weak fluency at the word level, a teacher can implement targeted interventions before moving forward with comprehension tasks.

Formative assessments, by contrast, are embedded in daily instruction and go unnoticed by learners. Sometimes referred to as assessment for learning, they provide ongoing feedback to both teachers and learners (Cain, 2013). Activities such as text retelling, classroom discussions, think-pair-share exercises, or short written responses allow teachers to gauge understanding in real time and correct misconceptions before they become entrenched (Behring & Laitusis, 2022). Meanwhile, summative assessments take a broader perspective, occurring at the end of instructional units or academic periods (Behring & Laitusis, 2022). These assessments, which include benchmark tests and state-level examinations, measure cumulative progress towards established learning goals.

Beyond these three major categories, teachers also employ classroom-based comprehension checks that can be seamlessly integrated into lessons. Various assessment methods, such as tests, quizzes, summarising stories, written reflections, or creative projects, can provide insight into how well learners construct meaning from text (Cain, 2013; Behring & Laitusis, 2022). In addition, creating a supportive classroom environment is vital. Teachers should foster a growth mindset, where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities, encouraging learners to take risks in their reading and discussions (Murray, 2016). Moreover, providing constructive feedback on learners' reading efforts helps them recognise their strengths and areas for improvement (Capaul, 2025). By implementing these strategies, teachers can cultivate a dynamic and engaging reading environment

that not only enhances learners' comprehension but also fosters a lifelong love for reading and learning.

Perception is a cognitive process through which individuals interpret and make sense of sensory information from their environment (Ni'mah & Sholihah, 2022). It involves assessing and forming impressions based on what is seen, felt, or thought. Learner perceptions refer to how learners interpret and respond to their reading experiences, including the strategies employed in reading instruction (Ni'mah & Sholihah, 2022). In the context of reading, learner perceptions encompass how learners interpret and respond to their reading experiences, including the strategies employed in their instruction (Ni'mah & Sholihah, 2022). These perceptions are pivotal in determining the effectiveness of IRS on learners' comprehension and critical analysis of texts. Variability in perceptions can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of IRS and its influence in learning experiences.

Agregado (2024) emphasises the importance of positive learner perceptions, noting that they can lead to increased motivation and engagement. Ali et al. (202) indicate that learners generally hold positive views towards IRS, particularly when they recognise the benefits associated with improved comprehension and enhanced analytical skills. When learners view IRS favourably, they are likely to approach complex texts with enthusiasm and confidence. This positive perception is essential, as it can significantly influence a learner's motivation and engagement with complex texts. When learners perceive IRS as beneficial, they are likely to embrace its strategies, leading to a deeper understanding of the material and a greater willingness to tackle challenging reading assignments. Conversely, negative perceptions can result in disengagement and resistance to employing IRS reading strategies, which can hinder learning outcomes.

Getie (2020) identifies internal factors, such as individual attitudes and emotional states, as critical influences on how learners respond to IRS. These internal factors can shape a learner's overall experience and willingness to engage with reading strategies. However, it is important to acknowledge that individual preferences and learning styles can shape how learners engage with IRS. Some learners may gravitate towards extensive reading, which emphasises enjoyment and overall language development (Alharbi, 2015). This preference highlights the diversity in learner experiences and suggests that one-size-fits-all approach to reading may not be effective (Alharbi,

2015). Instead, teachers should consider incorporating a variety of reading strategies to cater to different learner needs and preferences.

Additionally, Ahmad et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of contextual factors, suggesting that the choice of reading materials and learning environment can shape learners' interpretations and engagement. Recent literature has further illuminated the perceptions of IRS among learners, revealing both benefits and challenges associated with IRS implementation. For instance, Khazaal (2019) conducted a study that highlighted how IRS can significantly enhance learners' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. The structured approach of IRS allows learners to engage with texts more deeply, fostering a better understanding of language structures and improving their analytical abilities. This aligns with the findings of Widyaasita et al. (2020) Rajeki and Kurnia (2019) who noted that learners appreciate the systematic nature of IRS, which aids in developing their reading skills.

In contrast, Prayuda (2023) explored the perceptions of learners who found IRS to be a daunting task, particularly for those with prior difficulties in reading comprehension. Prayuda's study echoed the concerns raised by Hidi and Anderson (2013), indicating that anxiety and resistance can rise when learners feel overwhelmed by the demands of IRS. Such negative perceptions can hinder engagement and motivation, ultimately affecting learning outcomes. Andreas (2020) further examined the role of IRS in vocabulary acquisition and overall language proficiency. The study found that learners who embraced IRS reported significant improvements in their vocabulary, which is vital for effective communication. This finding supports the work of Chen and Wang (2019), who emphasised the positive impact of IRS on language development.

Moreover, Taembo (2023) investigated the classroom environment's influence on learners' perceptions of IRS. The study suggested that a supportive and encouraging atmosphere could mitigate negative perceptions, allowing learners to view IRS as a valuable learning tool rather than a burdensome task. By fostering a culture that embraces risk-taking and views mistakes as opportunities for growth, teachers can enhance learners' experiences with IRS. Therefore, perceptions among learners can lead to both benefits and challenges. While many learners recognise the advantages of IRS in improving reading skills and vocabulary, others experience anxiety and resistance, particularly if they have struggled with reading in the past (Chang, 2021). Creating a supportive classroom environment is essential for fostering positive perceptions and

maximising the effectiveness of IRS in enhancing learners' reading experiences (Jones & Nillas, 2022).

2.1.4 Benefits and challenges of IRS

IRS offers a range of benefits that can significantly enhance learners' reading experiences and language proficiency. One of the primary advantages of IRS is its ability to engage learners with challenging texts that often contain many unknown words. This exposure prompts learners to utilise dictionaries and other resources, thereby enhancing their vocabulary acquisition (Khazaal, 2019). The process of dealing with complex vocabulary enriches learners' language and encourages them to become more independent in their learning, as they seek out meanings and context for unfamiliar terms. Moreover, IRS promotes cooperation among learners as they frequently work together to comprehend intricate materials (Wang, 2017). This collaborative effort aids understanding and builds a supportive learning environment, where learners can share insights, clarify misunderstandings, and develop a sense of community (Khazaal, 2019). Engaging in discussions about challenging texts allows learners to articulate their thoughts and perspectives, further enhancing their comprehension (Wang, 2017).

Additionally, IRS enhances learners' ability to express themselves effectively, which is crucial for language proficiency (Chang, 2021). By engaging with intricate sentence structures and varied linguistic styles, learners develop a deeper understanding of how to construct their own sentences and articulate their thoughts clearly. This aligns with the findings of Andreas (2020), who noted that IRS contributes to overall language development by improving both written and spoken communication skills. Furthermore, IRS encourages learners to grasp sentence structures better, which is essential for their overall language development (Scrivener, 1994; Khazaal, 2019). Through the analysis of complex texts, learners become more adept at recognising grammatical patterns and stylistic choices, enhancing their writing and comprehension abilities.

Despite these numerous benefits, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges associated with IRS. One significant challenge associated with IRS is cognitive overload, particularly for learners who may already struggle with reading comprehension (Prayuda, 2023). When faced with complex texts and high expectations for detailed understanding, some learners experience frustration or anxiety (Prayuda, 2023). This cognitive strain can lead to disengagement, as learners may feel overwhelmed by the demands of IRS (Prayuda, 2023). Hidi and Anderson (2014) support this

notion, indicating that pressure to achieve a deep understanding of intricate materials can hinder motivation and participation, ultimately affecting learning outcomes. Vocabulary knowledge is essential for decoding texts as it enables learners to connect words to meaning and build coherent understanding. However, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) identified learners' limited vocabulary as a core barrier which hinders their reading comprehension.

Another challenge is the potential for IRS to limit learners' exposure to a broader range of reading experiences (Prayuda, 2023). Khazaal (2019) notes that overemphasis on IRS can lead learners to focus solely on detailed analysis, neglecting the enjoyment and exploration that come with reading for pleasure, which is essential for lifelong learning. Miller (2018) further supports this argument suggesting that when learners are conditioned to engage only in intensive reading, they miss out on the intrinsic motivation that arises from discovering new ideas and narratives. Additionally, IRS promotes surface-level understanding of texts if learners are not encouraged to connect the material to their own experiences or broader contexts. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) indicate that a lack of contextual understanding can hinder learners' ability to transfer knowledge across different contexts, which is key for effective communication and critical thinking. Andreas (2020) posits that without making these connections, learners may struggle to apply their understanding in real-world situations, limiting the practical application of their reading skills.

Furthermore, Taembo (2023) highlights the emotional and psychological barriers that learners face in IRS. The pressure to perform well in intensive reading tasks can lead to anxiety and a fear of failure, particularly among learners who have previously struggled with reading. This emotional burden can create a negative feedback loop, where anxiety leads to disengagement, further intensifying the challenges associated with IRS. To maximise the effectiveness of IRS, teachers must be mindful of these challenges and provide appropriate support and resources, such as guidance on text structure and strategies for monitoring comprehension (Graham et al., 2020; Zano, 2020). By balancing the demands of IRS with opportunities for enjoyment and broader reading experiences, teachers can create a more effective and engaging learning environment.

2.2 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Recent literature has highlighted widespread reading challenges in Lesotho across different educational levels. For instance, Koloti (2020) reveals that learners in Grade R are introduced to reading in an environment lacking clear syllabi, appropriate books, and professional teacher

support, all of which are critical in shaping early literacy. This lack of exposure to early reading instruction results in long-term learning difficulties. Further, Phafoli and Thamae (2019) indicate that both primary and secondary learners in Lesotho struggle with oral reading in Sesotho, indicating foundational weaknesses that may hinder second language acquisition. Additionally, Likhoeli (2020) found that teachers lack the necessary competence to teach reading comprehension effectively, while learners exhibit poor comprehension skills and limited vocabulary. In support, Mphatsoane et al. (2023) revealed that learners face significant difficulties with reading due to limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and reliance on traditional teaching methods, limited vocabulary, and poor comprehension skills.

The empirical review of literature highlights several studies have been conducted on IRS in reading comprehension. For instance, Khazaal (2019) conducted a study focusing on college students in Iraq. The research aimed to explore the effectiveness of IRS in enhancing vocabulary development, particularly on students learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programmes. Grounded in constructivist theory, the mixed-methods study aimed to understand how intensive reading could facilitate vocabulary acquisition and enhance writing skills. The findings of this study indicated that intensive reading improved students' vocabulary acquisition and writing skills and participants reported positive attitudes towards vocabulary usage, suggesting that the intensive reading approach enhanced their linguistic capabilities and fostered engagement in the learning process.

Further, Cardenas (2020) conducted a study in a university setting in Columbia focusing on enhancing reading comprehension through IRS. The study aimed to explore the effectiveness of intensive reading to enhance reading comprehension among university students. This research employed mixed methods and adopted a constructivist theory. The participants of this study comprised 16 learners and the findings revealed that the intensive reading approach significantly enhanced learners' reading abilities; learners learned to make predictions, formulate questions and summarise content. This directly correlates with the current study, which aims to explore learners' perceptions towards IRS on reading comprehension.

Furthermore, Andres (2020) conducted a study that aimed at enhancing reading comprehension with an intensive reading worksheet. Grounded in cognitive constructivism, the said study sought to explore how structured reading activities could facilitate understanding and retention of a text. A mixed-methods quasi-experimental design, involving two groups of students was employed, and

the study findings indicated that the use of intensive reading worksheet improved students' ability to analyse and synthesise information from texts, demonstrating that structured reading activities can lead to deeper cognitive engagement.

Learner's perceptions of Intensive reading strategy significantly influence their willingness to adopt this method, and its effectiveness. For instance, Widyaasita et al. (2020) conducted a study that explored learners' perceptions towards their instructors' implementation of intensive reading strategy. The findings revealed that learners perceived intensive reading valuable for enhancing their language skills, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and comprehension. This indicates that positive perceptions of instructional methods can lead to greater engagement and success in reading comprehension. Therefore, understanding how learners perceive the relevance and applicability of intensive reading strategy to their academic success is important.

Prayuda's (2023) study investigated the effects of IRS on students' reading comprehension, employing a quasi-experimental design. The study aimed to determine whether a focused approach to reading could yield measurable benefits in comprehension outcomes. The results of the study indicated that the implementation of IRS had a significant positive effect on students' reading comprehension. Additionally, it was found that incorporating intensive reading strategies into the curriculum could enhance students' comprehension skills, making it a valuable approach for teachers seeking to improve literacy outcomes. Prayuda (2023) highlight the necessity of targeted interventions to address the comprehension gap among ESL learners, suggesting that effectiveness of IRS is contingent upon proper implementation and teacher support.

Furthermore, Hidayat (2023) conducted a study that aimed to explore the effectiveness of IRS in enhancing reading comprehension among college students. Hidayat employed a quasi-experimental design to investigate the impact of intensive reading on students' comprehension abilities. The findings revealed that the implementation of IRS improved comprehension skills and enhanced motivation and engagement in the learning process. The study suggests that teachers should consider incorporating intensive reading strategies into their teaching methodologies to improve learners' reading comprehension skills. Additionally, curriculum developers can use these findings to design reading programmes that focus on intensive reading techniques, ensuring that learners are equipped with effective comprehension strategies. Furthermore, the study highlights that intensive reading can enhance learners' motivation and engagement in the learning process,

implying that teachers should create learning environments that foster active participation and interest in reading. Hidayat (2023) reinforces this notion, demonstrating that without adequate training and resources, the potential benefits of IRS cannot be fully realised.

Nation and Macalister (2020) conducted a study that explored the effectiveness of IRS in enhancing reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study addressed the critical need for effective reading practices that could support learners in navigating complex texts and improving their overall language proficiency. The study employed a mixed methods approach to gather comprehensive data. Nation and Macalister (2020) conducted surveys and interviews with both learners and teachers to understand their experiences with IRS. Additionally, the study analysed learner performance data to evaluate the effect of IRS on reading comprehension and vocabulary development. The study findings revealed significant insights. Firstly, the study demonstrated that IRS improved learners' comprehension skills, enabling them to engage deeply with complex texts. Secondly, the research highlighted the role of IRS in vocabulary development, as learners encountered new words in context, which facilitated better retention and understanding. Furthermore, the study emphasised the importance of structured reading approaches, including pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities, to maximise learning outcomes.

The implications of the study are profound for ESL and EFL teaching practices. Nation and Macalister (2020) advocate for integration of intensive reading tasks into the curriculum, suggesting that IRS can be a powerful tool for developing language skills in diverse learner populations. Nation and Macalister also emphasised the need for teachers to adopt structured methodologies that guide learners through the reading process, enhancing their comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, the study suggests that combining IRS with other strategies, such as extensive reading, can create a balanced approach to literacy development, ultimately leading to improved language proficiency among learners.

Ni'mah and Sholihah (2022) conducted a study that investigated the effectiveness of various reading strategies on improving reading comprehension among EFL learners. The study was conducted in the context of Indonesian higher education, where English proficiency is increasingly essential for academic success and global communication. Ni'mah and Sholihah aimed to address the challenges faced by learners in comprehending English texts, which hinder their overall

language acquisition and academic performance. The study employed a quasi-experimental research design. Additionally, qualitative data were generated through interviews and questionnaires to gain insights into learners' perceptions of the reading strategies employed. The study findings revealed improvements in reading comprehension among learners who were taught using IRS and collaborative learning. The experimental group outperformed the control group in post-test scores, indicating that the combination of these strategies effectively enhanced their ability to understand and analyse texts. Furthermore, qualitative data suggested that learners appreciated the collaborative aspect of the learning process, as it fostered peer support and engagement, making the reading experience more enjoyable and effective.

The study implications highlight the importance of incorporating innovative reading strategies that go beyond traditional reading strategies, emphasising the need for a more interactive and collaborative approach to reading instruction. By integrating IRS with collaborative learning, teachers can create a more dynamic learning environment that improves reading comprehension and fosters critical thinking and communication skills among learners.

However, in the Lesotho context, there seems to be a lack of literature on IRS, and the recent studies (Likhoeli, 2020; Mphatsoane et al., 2023) address challenges faced by learners in reading comprehension. For instance, Likhoeli (2020) conducted a qualitative study that aimed to investigate challenges faced by ESL teachers and learners in the teaching and learning of reading comprehension in two selected Lesotho secondary schools in Quthing district. The study findings revealed that teachers are incompetent to teach reading comprehension while learners have poor comprehension and limited vocabulary to comprehend written texts. Likhoeli's study reveals critical implications for improving reading comprehension instruction. The finding that teachers are not well equipped to teach reading comprehension underscores the urgent need for enhanced teacher training programmes. The implication is that teachers are not fully equipped to use IRS and this hinders learners' competence in effective reading comprehension. Therefore, there should be programmes that equip teachers with effective strategies for teaching reading comprehension to ESL learners.

Furthermore, the study findings recommend a curriculum review and revision to address the specific challenges faced by these learners, potentially through more explicit vocabulary instruction and comprehension strategy development. In addition, the research findings call for

allocation of adequate reading materials to support both teachers and learners. Likhoeli's research calls for further investigation into the underlying factors contributing to reading challenges and the evaluation of different intervention strategies to inform future practice.

The quantitative study by Mphatsoane et al. (2023) investigated the integration of blended learning in Lesotho to enhance reading skills among learners for whom English is a second language. It emphasises the importance of creating inclusive educational environments to support diverse learning needs. The study findings demonstrate that blended learning approaches, when implemented effectively, can positively influence reading comprehension and fluency for learners. The study highlights the necessity of developing inclusive educational platforms to cater to the diverse needs of learners. This implies that blended learning should be carefully designed to address potential barriers to access and participation, such as limited internet connectivity, lack of digital literacy skills, and varying levels of English proficiency. The current study aims to explore the influence of IRS in enhancing reading for comprehension among ESL learners. This research will be particularly relevant given the effective reading skills in academic settings, where comprehension is significant for success. By exploring learners' perceptions towards IRS, the study seeks to address several gaps identified in the existing literature, particularly in relation to the unique challenges faced by ESL learners.

While previous studies, such as those by Khazaal (2019), Cardenas (2024) and Hidayat (2023), have demonstrated the effectiveness of IRS in various contexts, this study seeks to build upon these findings by specifically exploring the ESL learners' perceptions and experiences with IRS. Moreover, Likhoeli (2020) indicated that several factors including teachers' poor pedagogical tools, scarcity of reading materials, lack of reading comprehension skills and strategies, and learners' poor comprehension and limited vocabulary contribute significantly to reading challenges. Furthermore, Mphatsoane et al. (2023) highlight challenges in reading comprehension, including teacher incompetence and learner difficulties with vocabulary and comprehension. The said studies recommend that teachers need to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to teach reading comprehension effectively and to create a print-rich environment, where learners are exposed to various texts to improve reading comprehension. There is a notable lack of research on IRS in the context of Lesotho secondary ESL learners; therefore, this proposed study aims to fill this gap by exploring learners' perceptions on IRS on reading for comprehension in Lesotho.

In addition, while mixed methods approaches have been common in previous research, the current study emphasises qualitative insights from ESL learners regarding their experiences with IRS. This approach has provided a more comprehensive understanding of how these strategies influence reading for comprehension in ESL learners. Furthermore, previous studies have generally assessed overall reading comprehension without examining specific skills such as inference, summarisation, and critical analysis.

Implication of findings

This study draws on the findings from several key studies (Khazaal, 2019; Prayuda, 2023; Andreas, 2020; Nation & Macalister, 2020; Likhoeli, 2020; Mphatsoane et al., 2023). While international studies provide valuable insights on IRS, such as its role in vocabulary retention, motivation enhancement, and structured engagement, while noting Lesotho's research gap amid teacher incompetence, resource scarcity, and learner challenges. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how IRS is implemented, perceived, and experienced by ESL learners in Lesotho. Implications include enhanced teacher training through mandatory workshops on structured reading activities to address teacher incompetence and reduce learner frustration (Likhoeli, 2020; Hidayat, 2023). Moreover, curriculum revisions integrating localised texts and blended tools to combat resource scarcity and boost inference through background knowledge (Nation & Macalister, 2020; Mphatsoane et al, 2023); and learner-focused approaches that leverage positive learner attitudes to foster motivation, lifelong habits, and equity in resources-limited settings (Cardenas, 2020; Ni'mah & Sholihah, 2022). Further, adaptive pilots for Lesotho's multilingual barriers can inform inclusive policies targeting vocabulary and comprehension (Prayuda,2023; Khazaal, 2019), while IRS links to critical thinking and writing support, holistic ESL proficiency for academic and professional readiness, with assessment reforms emphasising sub-skills (Andrews, 2020; Hidayat, 2023). Broader recommendations advocate IRS in national frameworks through localized longitudinal studies, international collaborations, and metrics tracking sustained gains, adapting global insights to Lesotho's realities for ESL success.

2.3 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND APPLICATION

Theoretical underpinnings form the foundation of research by integrating relevant concepts, definitions, and established theories, linking the study to the broader knowledge domains and demonstrating the researcher's grasp of the topic (Tegan, 2023). Developed through literature review, they are selected for appropriateness, applicability, and explanatory strength, enabling

critical evaluation of assumptions, hypothesis formulation, and methodological choices (Drafting an Argument, writing @CSU, Colorado State University). Application extends these underpinnings into practical utility, transforming theory into actionable insights (Tegan, 2023). Theoretical underpinnings and their application shape research methodology by providing a structured foundation that informs every stage of the research process.

This study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) proposed by Icek Ajzen (1985). TPB is a psychological framework that explains how individual intentions influence behaviour. This theory was an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which Ajzen co-developed with Martin Fishbein. TRA focused on attitudes and subjective norms but assumed that individuals have control over their behaviours. However, Ajzen later recognised that TRA did not account for behaviours influenced by external factors and situational constraints. To address this, Ajzen introduced the concept of perceived behavioural control in the TPB. TPB identifies three key principles that shape behavioural intentions: attitude towards behaviour, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control.

TPB emphasises the role of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control in shaping an individual's intention to perform a specific behaviour (Zhang et al., 2015). In the context of reading comprehension, the TPB can be applied to understand the factors that influence a learner's intention to engage in reading activities and their subsequent reading comprehension performance. The theory provides a framework for examining the underlying beliefs and motivations that drive reading behaviour.

The TPB posits that learners' intention to engage in a behaviour is the immediate predictor of that behaviour (Abbasi et al., 2022). This intention is determined by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (La Barbera & Ajzen, 2021). Attitude refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a behaviour (Abbasi et al., 2021). TPB provides a structured approach to understanding the intentions behind learners' choices to adopt or reject IRS (Ajzen (1985). In the context of reading comprehension, attitude reflects a learner's overall perception of reading; whether they find it enjoyable, valuable, or useful (La Barbera & Ajzen, 2021). Learners with a positive attitude are more likely to develop a stronger intention to read and, consequently, exhibit better reading comprehension (La Barbera & Ajzen, 2021). TPB allowed the researcher to identify and analyse the various influences on learners' perceptions, including their

beliefs about the effectiveness of this strategy in improving reading comprehension and language skills. Whitten et al. (2016) highlight that learners' positive attitude towards IRS can lead to increased engagement and motivation, which are essential for effective comprehension. Moreover, Ofuani and Gbenedio (2018) emphasise that factors such as self-concept, teacher and classroom environment, socio-economic status, and parental involvement can shape learners' attitudes towards reading. This implies that if learners perceive IRS beneficial, they are more likely to adopt it, thereby enhancing their comprehension skills. This aligns with the findings of Briones and Hussien (2024) who assert that learners with a positive attitude towards reading are more likely to enjoy what they read, become proficient readers, and achieve higher academic success.

Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressures to perform or not to perform a behaviour (Ajzen, 1985; Abbasi et al., 2021). In the context of reading comprehension, subjective norms reflect learners' perception of whether important people in their lives such as parents, teachers, and peers approve of and support their reading efforts (Reinecke, 2018). If learners believe that others expect them to read and value reading, they are more likely to form a stronger intention to read (Reinecke, 2018). The influence of teachers, parents, peers and the educational environment can affect learners' willingness to engage with IRS (Ajzen, 1985). Teachers play an important role in fostering a reading culture by encouraging learners to read with intention and providing a supportive environment. As noted by Ofuani and Gbenedio (2018), the classroom environment and teacher support can significantly affect learners' attitude and motivation towards IRS. When learners perceive that their peers and teacher value IRS and engage in it themselves, they are more likely to adopt similar behaviours (Ofuani & Gbenedio, 2018). This social influence can enhance their motivation to engage with IRS, as they may feel encouraged and supported by their social environment. Thus understanding the subjective norms surrounding reading is essential for teachers in implementing IRS.

Perceived behavioural control refers to an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour (Abbasi et al., 2021). In the context of reading comprehension, perceived behavioural control reflects a learner's belief in their ability to comprehend the text (Wong et al., 2025; Xie & Huang, 2024). This include factors such as their reading skills, access to resources, and the availability of support (Xie & Huang, 2024). Therefore, learners' confidence in their ability to implement IRS, along with the availability of resources and support, will affect their

engagement (Xie & Huang, 2024). If learners feel capable and supported, they are more likely to engage with reading materials effectively. Walia and Sinha (2014) specify that reading habits require complex skills such as perceiving a message, skimming and scanning information, and understanding context. Learners who struggle with these skills may feel less confident in their reading abilities, leading to avoidance of reading activities. The ability to adopt IRS is influenced by learners' mood and self-efficacy. When learners believe they can succeed in adopting IRS, they are more likely to engage with challenging texts and adopt effective reading techniques. Diperna and Elliot (2000) argue that compelling reading depends on readers' behaviours that enable them to conceptualise new knowledge effectively.

Summary

This chapter examined existing research on IRS and its impact on reading comprehension. It discussed the importance of reading strategies in developing comprehension skills, and highlighted the benefits of IRS such as improved vocabulary and critical thinking. The chapter also addressed the challenges faced by learners and identified gaps in the literature, particularly in the context of Lesotho. Additionally, it reviewed the theoretical framework: the Theory of Planned Behaviour and its relevance to understanding learners' engagement with IRS. The next chapter outlines the methodology.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research methodology constitutes the foundational framework that underpins the research endeavour. Specifically, this section encompasses the epistemological paradigm underlying the investigation, the chosen approach, and the conceptualised research design. Furthermore, the methodology delineates the sampling strategy and methodologies employed for data generation, including the instruments devised for generating data.

3.1 PARADIGM

A research paradigm is the conceptual lens through which the researcher examines the methodological aspect of their research to determine the research methods used and how data was analysed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This study employed the interpretivist paradigm, also known as the constructivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm emphasises understanding the subjective experiences of individuals, which is important when exploring how ESL learners perceive and engage with IRS (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). The central tenet of the interpretivist paradigm is the belief that knowledge is socially constructed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In the context of ESL learners, this denotes that their backgrounds, experiences, and interactions with the texts influence their understanding and application of IRS. In this case, the interpretivist paradigm allowed the researcher to gain holistic understanding of the multifaceted experiences of ESL learners as they engaged with IRS, capturing the unique ways in which each learner interprets and constructs meaning from texts (Punch, 2005). This aligned with the paradigm's emphasis on understanding the individual rather than seeking universal laws, as each learner's context was shaped by their comprehension reading strategies.

This paradigm assumes that knowledge is constructed through social interactions, with both the researcher and the participants co-constructing meaning (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). This leads to

an understanding that there are multiple realities, as each learner may have a different experience and perception of reading strategies based on their language proficiency, prior knowledge, and cognitive process (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). The methodology emphasises a naturalistic approach where data was collected in real-life settings through methods including interviews and observations, allowing the researcher to observe learners' behaviours and gather their reflections. The interpretivist paradigm provided a framework for exploring IRS, focusing on the personal, subjective meanings they attached to this strategy and how their comprehension was influenced by their individual experiences. The aim was to develop an understanding grounded in the data generated from the participants, allowing for a more refined exploration of IRS on reading comprehension in an ESL context.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

A research approach is the overarching plan and set of procedures that guide the research study, spanning from selected methods of data generation, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2015). This study employed a qualitative approach which Creswell (2015) defines as a research approach that explores and provides deeper insights in the real-world problems. This approach is appropriate for this study as it focuses on understanding human subjective experiences, behaviours, and meanings that individuals or groups attach to social phenomena (Creswell, 2015). It involves collecting non-numeric data such as interviews, observations, and open-ended surveys, in natural settings where participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings (Creswell, 2018).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a strategy used to answer research questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It involves steps followed for extracting, analysing, interpreting, and reporting data in a study (Boru, 2018). The proposed study adopted a multiple case study approach involving three distinct schools. Each school was deliberately selected based on its differing performance levels in reading comprehension, which introduces varied contextual conditions and learner characteristics. These differences mean that the conditions in three schools were not homogeneous, and each school represents a separate case for in-depth examination. This multiple case study allowed for comparative analysis across diverse contexts, providing a richer understanding of how IRS influence learners' reading comprehension under different school performance conditions (Heale & Twycross, 2017; Yin, 2008). By examining each school as an individual case, the study captured the impact of contextual factors such as instructional techniques, learner proficiency, and resource

availability unique to each setting. Thus, the use of a multiple case study approach enhanced the credibility and applicability of the findings, offering context-specific insights and tailored recommendations for implementing IRS in varied educational environments. The use of multiple data sources including, interviews with learners and document analysis, provided a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the phenomenon, allowing for rich insights (Yin, 2018). The systematic steps involved in a multiple case study, included planning, design, preparation, data generation, analysis, and reporting (Yin, 2018), ensured the credibility and reliability of the research findings (Yin, 2018).

3.4 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Sampling is the process of selecting a representative sample from a larger population for drawing inferences and conclusions about that population (Makwana et al., 2023). The population in this study refers to Grade 10 English Language learners in Mafeteng secondary schools where English is taught as a second language. A sample, conversely, is a subset of this population, and participated directly in the research (McCombes, 2019).

To gain in-depth insights, this study employed a purposive sampling technique (Cohen et al., 2018) to select a sample of 12 Grade 10 English Language learners from three schools. Four learners per school were selected within the Mafeteng district. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who possessed specific characteristics relevant to the research questions (Cohen et al., 2018). Twelve Grade 10 learners provided a manageable number for a detailed analysis of their English Language learning experiences while selecting three schools allowed for a comparison of different learning environments within the Mafeteng district. Considering that the three selected schools in Mafeteng closed for holidays later than in other regions, limiting the sample size ensured that data generation was completed within the available timeframe. However, the small sample might not be representative of the larger population, limiting the generalisability of findings.

The three schools were purposively selected to represent a range of academic performance levels in English Language learning. One school was recognised for consistently achieving top results in English Language assessments, one attained average results, and the other faced challenges and consistently demonstrated lower performance in English Language assessments. All the three selected schools are located in the urban region of Mafeteng. Participants were selected to represent a range of English Language proficiency levels (for instance, beginner, intermediate, and

advanced) within each school, as determined by teacher recommendation and/or classroom performance. Participants were selected on their willingness and ability to participate in interviews and other data generation activities. An effort was made to include participants from diverse backgrounds (for example, gender and socio-economic status) within each school where possible. These criteria ensured that the sample was representative of the diverse experiences of Grade 10 English Language learners in Mafeteng and allowed for a comprehensive investigation of the research questions.

Table 1: Description of participants

Schools' pseudonyms	Participants' pseudonyms	Gender	Age
SA	L1	M	16
	L2	M	17
	L3	F	15
	L4	F	16
SB	L1	M	16
	L2	M	16
	L3	F	17
	L4	F	19
SC	L1	M	15
	L2	M	15
	L3	F	16
	L4	F	15

Key: S= school, L= learner

Table 1 above presents a demographic overview of participants from the three different schools, designated as SA, SB, and SC. Each school includes a mix of male and female participants (four per school), aged between 15 and 19 years. This data highlights the diversity in age and gender

among the participants, which may be relevant for understanding various social or educational dynamics within these schools. The table serves as a foundational reference for analysing the characteristics of the participant group in any subsequent research or discussion. In the next chapter, reference is made using both the school code and their personal code so that, for example, A1 refers to Learner 1 from School A and B2 refers to Learner 2 from School B

3.5 DATA GENERATION INSTRUMENTS

Data generation instruments are tools that specify the methods and procedures for data generation (Sukmawati et al., 2023). Data in this qualitative research was generated through fieldwork and included conducting semi-structured interviews and document analysis. This was the process the researcher employed to generate data within the natural environment of the study participants.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews involved conducting one-on-one discussions with ESL learners. The interviews were guided by a set of open-ended questions that aligned with the research questions, allowing for in-depth exploration of learners' experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding intensive reading strategy (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). This method was effective for generating qualitative data as it allowed for flexibility in responses and encouraged participants to elaborate on their thoughts and feelings. It provided rich contextual information that revealed insights into how intensive reading strategy is perceived and implemented. One limitation of semi-structured interviews is the potential for bias, where the interviewer's presence and questioning style could influence participants' responses. To mitigate interviewer bias, the researcher maintained neutrality and avoided leading questions. Furthermore, use of a diverse sample of participants helped ensure a range of perspectives, enhancing the credibility of the findings.

3.5.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and interpreting written documents to answer specific research questions (Morgan, 2022). The researcher analysed relevant documents such as curriculum materials, lesson plans, and learners' work samples to gain insights into the implementation of IRS in the classroom. This analysis involved identifying key themes and strategies employed during implementation of IRS, which helped in understanding which instructional techniques were implemented in practice and their influence on learner engagement and comprehension. By triangulating findings from document analysis with data generated from interviews, the researcher enhanced the robustness of conclusions. This method provided empirical

evidence of the strategies employed and allowed for deeper understanding of the context in which IRS is applied, thus addressed the research questions regarding the implementation and effectiveness of IRS in enhancing comprehension (Morgan, 2022). A limitation of document analysis was that the available documents did not fully represent the current practices and were incomplete. Additionally, the interpretation of documents was subjective, and led to biases in understanding their content. To address these limitations, a thorough review of multiple documents was done to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the context.

The use of multiple data sources allowed for triangulation, which is the use of various sources of data to study a single phenomenon to enhance the credibility and reliability of research findings (Valencia, 2022). Triangulation was important, and was achieved by combining data from semi-structured interviews and document analysis. By comparing and contrasting the qualitative insights from interviews with the evidence gathered from documents, the researcher identified patterns, corroborated findings, and gained a more holistic understanding of perceptions of ESL learners towards IRS (Creswell, 2014). This approach strengthened the credibility of the research and provided a rich perspective on the research questions, leading to more robust conclusions and recommendations.

Table 2: Data generation methods

Research Questions	Data Generation methods	Data Analysis Approach
How is IRS implemented in Grade 10 ESL classrooms and what practices are employed for learners’ engagement and comprehension?	Semi-structured interviews, document analysis (syllabus, lesson plans)	Inductive thematic analysis to identify implementation patterns from both interviews and documents (compare learners’ descriptions with documented English Language syllabus, classroom practices to validate implementation methods)
How do Grade 10 ESL learners perceive IRS?	Semi-structured interviews	Inductive thematic analysis to explore emerging perceptions and attitudes

How do Grade 10 ESL learners perceive the role of their teachers in facilitating the implementation of IRS?	Semi-structured interviews	Inductive theme development around teacher support and classroom facilitation
What benefits do Grade 10 ESL learners get and what challenges do they face in adopting IRS?	Semi-structured interviews, Document analysis (test samples or feedback evaluation)	Inductive identification of recurring benefits and challenges (match reported challenges and benefits with actual performance evidence)

Table 2 above outlines the data generation methods and analysis approaches used to address the research questions related to the implementation of IRS in Grade 10 ESL classrooms. Each research question is paired with appropriate data generation methods, primarily utilising semi-structured interviews and document analysis of the syllabus, scheme of work, and lesson plans. The first question investigates how IRS is implemented and the practices employed for learners’ engagement and comprehension, using both interviews and document analysis. The analysis for this question involves inductive thematic analysis to identify patterns in implementation by comparing learners’ descriptions with documented practices.

The second question focuses on learners’ perceptions of IRS, relying solely on semi-structured interviews, employing an inductive thematic analysis to explore learners’ emerging attitudes. The third question examines the perceived role of the teachers in facilitating IRS; also using semi-structured interviews and inductive theme development to understand the support provided by the teachers. The fourth question addresses the benefits learners derive and the challenges they faced in adopting IRS, combining semi-structured interviews with document analysis of test samples or feedback evaluations. The analysis aims to identify recurring themes related to benefits and challenges correlating reported experiences with actual performance evidence.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the process of reviewing and interpreting generated data to find patterns, trends, and relationships to enable researchers to draw conclusions and answer their research questions by using statistical methods and techniques to make sense of the information gathered (Wickham,

2016). The researcher used thematic analysis, which enabled systematic organisation and analysis of complex data sets by identifying and interpreting patterns or themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This approach is particularly valuable in qualitative studies, as it allows the researcher to understand participants' experiences and the meanings they attach to those experiences (Chamberlain, 2015). According to Braun and Clarke (2012), thematic analysis is theoretically flexible, making it suitable for the current research that seeks to explore learners' perceptions towards IRS on reading comprehension.

In exploring learners' perceptions towards IRS on reading for comprehension, the inductive thematic analysis approach was relevant. This is because the goal was to understand how learners perceive IRS, and their teachers' role in implementing IRS from the perspective of the learners, which involved deriving themes directly from data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In the inductive analysis, the data is coded without trying to fit themes into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's preconceptions about the research (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This approach is characterised by its bottom-up process, where themes emerge directly from the data itself rather than being imposed by the researcher (Dawadi, 2020). In the inductive thematic analysis, as outlined by Dawadi (2020), the process involves several steps as outlined in the sub-sections.

Step1: Familiarisation with the data

The first step in inductive thematic analysis was to become familiar with the dataset. This step helped the researcher to determine the type of themes that emerged through the data. This involved reading and re-reading the data to gain a comprehensive understanding of its content (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The researcher took notes and highlighted initial thoughts and observations that arose during this process. Dawadi (2020) emphasises that this immersion is crucial for developing a nuanced understanding of the data, which sets the foundation for subsequent analysis.

Step 2: Generating Initial codes

Once the researcher was familiar with the data, the next step was to generate initial codes. This involved identifying specific features of the data that were relevant to the research questions and labelling them with codes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Dawadi (2020) notes that coding can be done manually or with the help of qualitative data analysis software, with the aim to capture meaningful segments of data that reflect the participants' experiences and perspectives.

Step3: Searching for Themes

After generating initial codes, the researcher began to collate the codes into potential themes. This step involved grouping related codes together to form broader categories that represented significant patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Dawadi (2020) highlights the importance of considering how these themes relate to the research questions and objectives, ensuring that they accurately reflect the data's content.

Step 4: Reviewing Themes

The next step was to review the identified themes to ensure they accurately represent the data. The researcher checked if the themes were aligned to the coded extracts and the entire dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Dawadi (2020) suggests that this step may involve refining, splitting, or discarding themes to enhance clarity and coherence. It was essential to ensure that the themes were distinct and provided a comprehensive understanding of the data.

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Once the themes were reviewed, the researcher defined and named each theme, providing a clear description of what each theme represented (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Dawadi (2020) emphasises that this step is crucial for articulating the significance of the themes in relation to the research questions and the existing literature. A detailed analysis was then prepared, linking the themes back to the research context and theoretical framework.

Step 6: Producing the Report

The final step involved producing a report that presented the findings of the thematic analysis. This report included a detailed description of the themes, supported by illustrative quotes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Dawadi (2020) notes that the report should not only summarise the findings but also provide insights into the implications of the research, contributing to the broader field of the study.

Inductive analysis allowed the researcher to identify themes that emerged directly from the data generated from participants, such as their experiences, perceptions, benefits and challenges related to IRS. Themes emerged through the data itself without paying attention to the themes included in other studies. The themes were linked to the data instead of the researcher's theoretical interest in the topic. This led to a richer understanding of how IRS affects comprehension.

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness refers to the degree to which the findings of a study can be considered credible, reliable, and applicable to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is a critical aspect that ensures the integrity of qualitative research, allowing researchers to present their findings with confidence. Trustworthiness is evaluated through four key criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility pertains to reflecting participants' perspectives accurately (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance credibility, I employed various strategies, such as triangulation of data sources, member checking and, peer briefing. Triangulation helped to cross-verify data from multiple sources (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Member checking involved returning to participants' voice records to validate findings, ensuring that the interpretations accurately reflected their actual experiences.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings can be applied to other contexts or settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability emphasises the richness of the data and the context in which it was generated. Drisko (2024) suggests that researchers should clearly articulate the context and characteristics of the study to facilitate transferability. In this study, transferability was enhanced by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and processes allowing readers to determine the applicability of the findings to their own context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This included demographic information, cultural background, and the setting in which the research took place.

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability focuses on the stability and consistency of the findings over time and under similar circumstances (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure dependability, I kept detailed records of the research processes, including data generation methods and analysis techniques, and any changes made during the study. This audit trail allowed other researchers to follow the research process and assess the consistency of the findings (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are shaped by the participants and not by the researchers' bias, motivation, or interest (Jansen, 2025). I enhanced confirmability by maintaining a journal, documenting my thoughts, feelings and biases throughout the research

process. This practice allowed me to critically examine the influence of the findings on the research and ensured they were grounded in the data (Jansen, 2025).

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are paramount in research, particularly when human participants are involved. They encompass the code of conduct that researchers must adopt to ensure that the data generated is handled responsibly and respectfully. According to Cohen et al. (2018), ethical considerations pertain to the researcher's conduct at both personal and professional levels throughout the research process. Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasise the importance of respecting the values, principles, and beliefs of participants. In this regard, I obtained a letter of permission from the institution and presented it to the selected schools, held meetings with school principals to request to conduct the study and discussed the research objectives and roles of participants. This approach not only fostered trust but also ensured that participants were informed about the study. Furthermore, participants were made aware of their rights, including the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). This denotes that I assured them I would use pseudonyms to protect their identities, and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without coercion. By providing this information, I empowered participants to make informed decisions about their involvement.

Summary

The chapter outlined the methodology of the study, which commenced with the philosophical lens, research approach, and the research design. The sampling techniques and instruments used in the study were also outlined. The chapter discussed the methods of data generation, method of data analysis, and strategies for ensuring trustworthiness and ethical considerations in conducting the research.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed analysis and interpretation of the data generated on learners' perceptions towards IRS and its influence on reading comprehension. The discussion integrates the research findings with the theoretical framework and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 to contextualise and support the interpretation. In alignment with the paradigm, approach, design, population and sampling procedures, data generation methods, data analysis strategies, trustworthiness criteria and ethical considerations, the findings are systematically presented. Data was obtained through two primary methods: semi-structured interviews and document analysis. These methods provided insights into how IRS is implemented, perceived by the learners and facilitated by the teachers, as well as the benefits and challenges experienced by the learners.

The generated data was generated from the following research questions:

1. How is IRS implemented in Grade 10 ESL classrooms and what practices are employed for learners' engagement and comprehension?
2. How do Grade 10 ESL learners perceive IRS?
3. How do Grade 10 ESL learners perceive the role of their teachers in facilitating the implementation of IRS?
4. What benefits do Grade 10 ESL learners get and challenges do they face in adopting IRS?

4.1 DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings were obtained from the semi-structured interviews with participants and the document analysis of the Grade 10 English Language syllabus. The findings of this study are organised around key themes that emerged from data generated across three schools. The inductive thematic analysis of the LGCSE English Language syllabus, scheme of work and participants' responses from three schools (N= 12) reveals significant insights into the implementation of IRS and its influence on reading comprehension. In the presentation of data, reference to the learner participants uses both the school code and the code assigned to the learner so that A1 means Learner 1 from School A and B1 refers to Learner 1 from School B

4.1.1 Initial coding

Table 3: Codes derived from participants' interview responses, syllabus, and schemes o

Repeated ideas across learners	Codes from the Syllabus	Repeated codes across schemes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading silently for understanding • Guided reading / teacher scaffolding • Reading questions first to locate answers • Underlining key points and unknown words • Using dictionaries or smartphones for vocabulary • Using background / prior knowledge • Making predictions • Summarising in own words • Memorising content • Making meaning from personal experiences • Clarifying difficult parts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading for ideas • Reading for explicit meaning • Identifying tone and bias • Types of questions: facts vs. opinion and vocabulary questions • Reading for implicit meaning: prior knowledge, interpretation, and drawing conclusions • Deducing meaning: inference, finding contextual clues, synonyms and antonyms • Reading activities: pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions and Answers • Past question papers • Quiz • Tests • Fact / opinion • Skimming and scanning • Discussion • Discovery • Dictionary • Mobile phones

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting to other subjects • Scanning for ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills: • Question formulation • Summarisation • Relating text to real life • Skimming and scanning • Note taking • Paraphrasing • Predictions • Vocabulary • Collaborative learning • Suggested resources: prescribed textbooks, pictures, dictionary, mobile phones and reference material 	
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Table 3 above illustrates the initial coding process by linking participants’ repeated reading strategies with syllabus codes and common practices. Participants frequently mentioned techniques such as silent reading, guided reading with teacher support, previewing questions to locate answers, underlining key points, using dictionaries or smartphones, making predictions, and summarising. These align with the syllabus themes such as reading for explicit and implicit meaning, skimming, and scanning, note-taking, and collaborative learning. Across schemes, similar codes appear, including question-answer formats, quizzes and tests, discussions, and use

of dictionaries and smartphones. This comparison shows an alignment between participants' approaches, syllabus content, and teaching methods.

4.1.2 Theme 1: Structured reading process

The structured reading process refers to a systematic and deliberate approach that combines mechanical decoding and cognitive comprehension skills to develop reading proficiency (Castles et al., 2018; Hassard & Dias, 2013). Reading comprehension results from the combination of decoding and language comprehension which includes vocabulary and inference skills (Castles et al., 2018; Hassard & Dias, 2013; Murray 2016). The implementation of IRS emphasises this structured approach to enhance participants' engagement and understanding (Ali, 2022; Oktari et al., 2024). This theme was explored through these sub-themes: pre-reading, while reading, post-reading, vocabulary development, and the role of prior knowledge.

Sub-theme 1.1: Pre-reading Phase

Participants consistently described strategies used before reading to prepare themselves for comprehension. For instance, B1 shared: *"Before I read, I remove distractions and concentrate on the passage; I first read the topic and relate it to what I know."* Similarly, A4 state: *"I read the topic first to understand,"* while B4 noted: *"When reading the passage titled Tourism, I remembered what I learned about tourists in Geography."* These assertions indicate that participants used titles and prior knowledge to anticipate content and set a purpose for reading. These pre-reading strategies suggest that participants actively engaged in activating prior knowledge and focusing attention, which helps them approach texts with a clearer understanding. This preparation phase appears to be internalised by participants as an essential step towards comprehension.

In validation, Agbevivi and Adogpa (2022) and Nation and Macalister (2020) attest that pre-reading activities such as activating prior knowledge and introducing key vocabulary improve comprehension. Paran (2003) also supports this, noting that pre-reading strategies facilitated connections between existing knowledge and new information, thereby enhancing understanding. The participants' use of titles and prior knowledge reflected the syllabus's advocacy for these strategies, confirming that participants followed a structured reading process.

Sub-theme 1.2: While-reading Phase

During reading, participants reported employing active strategies such as scanning, underlining, questioning, and summarising. For example, C2 explained:

I scan through the passage to get the main idea. I go through the introduction, the rising action, and the climax point, and read with understanding.

B1 added: “*When I am reading, I think of what I am reading and mix it with my knowledge,*” and B4 said: “*I combine what I am reading with what I learned from other subjects.*” Participants also described underlining unknown words and using dictionaries or smartphones to find meanings (B2, B4, and C4). These declarations demonstrated that participants actively constructed meaning by integrating textual information with their background knowledge and using strategies to clarify vocabulary. However, there was a tendency to focus on locating explicit details rather than engaging deeply with inferential or evaluative comprehension.

This finding supports Smith’s (2021) assertion that comprehension was constructed through the interaction of decoding skills and prior knowledge. However, as noted by the National Reading Panel (2000) and Snow (2002), effective comprehension also requires higher-order processes such as monitoring, inferencing, and integration, which participants seem to underutilise. IRS instructional techniques like Directed Reading Thinking Activities (DRT) and K-W-L cycles (Apriliana, 2022; Hassard & Dias, 2013) were recommended to promote prediction, verification, and reflection, encouraging deeper engagement beyond surface-level reading.

Sub-theme 1.3: Vocabulary Development

Participants frequently mentioned strategies for vocabulary learning, including underlining unfamiliar words, consulting dictionaries or smartphones, and exploring synonyms. For example, B2 said: “*I underline words I do not know, and then find their meaning from the dictionary, the student companion, or my smartphone.*” Similarly, C4 remarked:

I underline words that I don’t know, guess their meaning from how they are used in the passage and look for meanings in the dictionary.

These vocabulary strategies indicated active engagement with new words, which supports comprehension and language development. Participants’ use of multiple resources and synonym exploration suggests a multifaceted approach to vocabulary acquisition. This aligned with Ma et

al.'s (2015) emphasis on active vocabulary engagement and McKeown's (2019) argument that effective vocabulary instruction requires rich, varied contexts and interaction. Puspitasari (2024) further highlights the value of collaborative discussions in deepening vocabulary understanding. The syllabus's focus on vocabulary work reinforces the importance of these strategies in the structured reading process.

Sub-theme 1.4: Prior Knowledge

Participants constantly reported connecting texts to their personal experiences and knowledge from other subjects. For instance, B4 stated: *"I combine what I am reading with what I learned from other subjects,"* and B1 noted: *"When I am reading, I think of what I am reading and mix it with my knowledge."* This demonstrates that prior knowledge played a critical role in comprehension, enabling participants to make inferences and deepen understanding. Smith (2021) and Hinckley (2024) emphasise that comprehension depends heavily on prior knowledge, as it allows readers to generate inferences and critically evaluate texts. Paran (2003) also supports the idea that activating prior knowledge enhances engagement and understanding, which is evident in participants' responses.

Sub-theme 1.5: Post-reading Phase

Participants described post-reading strategies such as summarising and self-questioning. For example, A1 said: *"I summarise in my own words, memorise what I have read and then answer questions,"* while B1 echoed: *"I question myself, summarise the text using my own words, memorise what I have read and then answer the questions."* These strategies indicate that participants attempted to consolidate understanding and self-assess comprehension after reading, which is crucial for retention and deeper engagement. This aligned with Setiyorini et al. (2022) and Hidayat et al. (2023) who highlight the importance of post-reading activities for reinforcing learning and encouraging reflection. The syllabus also recommends summarising, questioning, and evaluating as effective post-reading strategies.

Based on the findings obtained from participants' responses, the data revealed that participants engaged in a structured reading process encompassing pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading phases, supported by vocabulary development and activation of prior knowledge. While participants employed many effective strategies, their focus tends to remain on explicit comprehension rather than deeper inferential thinking. This suggests the need for instructional

emphasis on interactive and reflective techniques, as advocated by IRS literature, to foster more critical and meaningful reading experiences.

Alignment between interview data and document analysis (schemes of work and syllabus)

The findings revealed alignment among participants' reading approaches, syllabus recommendations, and schemes of work across three schools. This coherence suggested a shared understanding of the value of actively engaging with textual information, which is crucial for enhancing comprehension and retention. All the three strands of data- the participant data, the syllabus and schemes of work emphasised a three-phase reading strategy: before, during, and after reading. In the participant data, participants actively engaged in predicting content and removing distractions before reading, which sets a focused foundation for their comprehension. This pre-reading phase was mirrored in the syllabus, which encourages activating prior knowledge and making predictions. Such an alignment indicates that participants followed a structured approach.

During the reading phase, participants employed techniques such as scanning, underlining, and reading questions to guide their comprehension. This active engagement was supported by the syllabus, which highlights the importance of identifying key ideas and vocabulary. The emphasis on these strategies across both sources suggest a recognition of the necessity for learners to interact with texts dynamically, rather than passively absorbing information. In the post-reading phase, both the participant data and the syllabus advocated for summarising and self-questioning. This phase was critical for reinforcing understanding and promoting retention. The schemes of work, particularly in School B, further enhanced this phase by incorporating activities such as distinguishing between fact and opinion and engaging in discovery learning.

While the alignment across these sources appears robust, it is worth noting that such coherence, particularly a “perfect” match in emphasis on the three-phase strategy across three diverse schools may seem unusually harmonious in the context of ordinary Lesotho school system, where resource constraints, varying teacher implementation, and infrastructural challenges lead to fragmented practices as highlighted by (Likhoeli, 2020).

4.1.3 Theme 2: Teacher as facilitator

The role of the teacher as a facilitator in reading comprehension involves employing various strategies to guide learners towards becoming proficient and engaged readers (Sibanda, 2024).

These strategies include creating a supportive learning environment, utilising varied teaching methods, and understanding factors that influence reading comprehension (Murray, 2016). Teachers are expected to cultivate a space where learners feel comfortable taking risks, asking questions, and expressing their understanding of texts (Capaul, 2025). Moreover, teachers act as facilitators by creating active learning environments, scaffolding learner learning, and promoting collaboration (Hidayat et al., 2023).

In this study, participants described the teacher's role in specific terms. For instance, A1 explained: *"The teacher selects the text and guides us to read, breaks down texts, directs to questions, and scaffolds meaning-making."* Similarly, A2 added: *"My teacher directs us to read questions and then go straight to the paragraph that has answers to the questions."* A3 remarked: *"The teacher instructs us to read questions and read the paragraph that has answers as instructed."* Furthermore, B1 noted:

Teacher makes the passage understandable, asks me to make connections to the topic based on what I already know, and provides clarifications where I don't understand.

From these accounts, teacher guidance clearly emerged as central to how participants engaged with reading. Teachers provided passages, explained difficult sections, and directed attention to questions. This indicates that the teacher's role as facilitator and scaffold was pivotal in setting purposes, modelling strategies, and structuring interaction during reading activities (Murray, 2016; Ali, 2022; Hidayat et al., 2023). This finding aligned with Taembo (2023), who noted that guided reading promotes deeper engagement with texts. Additionally, the scaffolding provided by teachers was essential for helping learners navigate complex texts and develop their comprehension skills (Taembo, 2023). Supporting this, Murray (2016) found that explicit modelling of reading strategies improves comprehension proficiency, particularly for less proficient readers.

However, while such scaffolding supports understanding, it might also limit opportunities for participants to develop independent strategies to use. According to Ali (2022), good readers actively monitor their comprehension processes, which requires autonomy in strategy selection and application. If teacher direction dominates, participants may not progress towards self-regulated reading. In this study, facilitation appeared to remain teacher-dominated, limiting reciprocal talk and participant self-regulation, despite evidence from IRS research supporting reciprocal teaching and small-group dialogic reading to build autonomy (Alfassi et al., 2009; Kula,

2021; Hidayat et al., 2023). Furthermore, the Lesotho context reveals capacity constraints such as teacher preparedness and scarcity of materials, which can restrict the depth of facilitation (Likhoeli, 2020).

This dynamic can be further understood through Ajzen's (1985) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which posits that behaviour is influenced by behavioural intention, itself shaped by attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In this context, participants' intention to engage independently with reading strategies depended on their attitudes towards self-regulated reading; whether they perceive it as valuable and achievable. The teacher's dominant facilitation style may inadvertently shape learners' attitudes by positioning them as passive recipients rather than active agents, potentially diminishing their motivation to take initiative. Moreover, subjective norms (participants' perceptions of social expectations) were influenced by classroom practices. If the norm was teacher-led reading, participants might feel less encouraged to take control of their comprehension processes.

Additionally, perceived behavioural control or participants' confidence in their ability to use independent strategies might be undermined if scaffolding was overly directive and did not allow participants to practise autonomy. Consequently, the role of the teacher as facilitator in teacher-led reading involved guiding participants through the reading process, fostering engagement, and promoting autonomy (Ajzen, 1985; Laurice, 2004). To enhance participant independence, shifting norms by building routines where participants led Directed Reading-Thinking (D-R-T) or K-W-L segments, or rotate roles in reciprocal teaching, could normalise participant support while the teacher continues to instruct.

4.1.4 Theme 3: Assessment methods

Reading assessment is one of the factors that influence the ability to develop learners' reading skills. Assessment methods refer to the various tools and approaches teachers use to evaluate learners' ability to understand and make meaning from texts (Behring & Laitusis, 2022). The data collected from the participating schools revealed several approaches to reading assessment. Specifically, teachers employed pre-reading strategies and diagnostic assessments by directing learners to read questions before engaging with the full text. From the participants' responses, this practice was observed as a means to identify comprehension gaps early on. Additionally, the evaluation methods varied across schools. Schools A and B predominantly used tests as the primary

assessment tool, whereas School C implemented a more diverse range of methods, including quizzes, homework, classwork, and tests.

Deducing these findings, it appeared that while some schools relied heavily on summative assessments such as tests, others adopted a more integrated approach that combines formative and summative assessments. The use of pre-reading strategies aligned with diagnostic assessment practices aimed at identifying participants' needs before instruction began. The variation in assessment methods across schools suggested differing emphasis on how reading comprehension was evaluated, which might affect the effectiveness of reading skill development. These findings correspond with the literature on reading assessment. Behring and Laitusis (2022) emphasise that assessment methods should encompass tools that measure both word recognition and higher-order comprehension skills to provide a comprehensive understanding of learners' reading abilities. Moreover, Cain (2013) highlights the importance of analysing decoding and language comprehension skills through varied assessment approaches to support effective literacy instruction. The detected use of diagnostic assessments before instruction and formative assessments during learning reflects best practices recommended by Hougen and Smartt (2012), who advocate for ongoing feedback to enhance reading development. Furthermore, the diversity of assessment methods in School C aligned with the notion that integrating multiple assessment types supports holistic reading comprehension, especially in English as Second Language contexts where cognitive and linguistic processes are complex (Cain, 2013).

In contrast, the reliance on tests alone in Schools A and B might limit the scope of feedback and fail to capture the full range of learners' reading abilities, as suggested by the literature. Therefore, the findings underscored the need for a balanced assessment approach that combines diagnostic, formative and summative methods to effectively support participants' reading proficiency

[Comparison between teaching methods](#)

Teaching methods in reading comprehension are essential for helping learners develop the skills necessary to understand, analyse and engage with texts effectively (Pressley, 2000). Various approaches were employed to enhance reading comprehension. Based on data generated from documents (schemes of work), School A primarily used questions and answer method, which may not fully engage participants or promote deeper understanding. In addition, the reliance on past question papers may limit exposure to diverse reading materials. School B employed a variety of

teaching approaches, discussions and discovery, which fostered a more interactive learning environment. This approach enabled participants connect ideas and enhanced comprehension. School C focused on discussions, which could encourage critical thinking and collaborative learning. This method might have helped participants articulate their thoughts and improve their understanding of texts. The reliance on past question papers across the three schools had several implications regarding teaching practices, assessment strategies, and participant outcomes. This approach suggested a strong emphasis on preparing participants for examinations, which might have led to a narrowed curriculum that prioritises test-taking skills over a broader understanding of reading comprehension strategies.

Moreover, the use of past question papers might have limited learners' exposure to diverse text genres. This reduced variety might have hindered the learners' ability to engage with different writing styles, themes, and contexts, which are essential for developing reading comprehension skills (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). As a result, participants might have become disengaged, perceiving reading merely as a means to answer questions rather than an opportunity for exploration and enjoyment. This disengagement could negatively affect their motivation to read (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). The reliance on past question papers also reflected an assessment-driven instructional approach. Teachers might have felt pressured to "teach to test" focusing their instruction on the types of questions that appear in previous assessments. This could lead to lack of innovation in teaching methods and a failure to address the diverse learning needs of learners.

Consequently, the use of past question papers might have limited teachers' ability to adapt their instruction based on participants' interests and needs, as they prioritised content that aligned with previous assessments. Furthermore, the reliance on traditional assessment methods, as highlighted by Mphatsoane et al. (2024), might limit opportunities for participants to express their understanding in diverse formats. Incorporating alternative assessment strategies, such as creative projects or collaborative discussions, could have enhanced participants' engagement and provided a more comprehensive evaluation of their comprehension skills.

Participants were assessed through a common district test, and the below table demonstrates their marks.

Table 4: Participants' marks

School and Participant pseudonym	Participant mark- _rated out of 50	School average mark
A1	22	25.0
A2	21	
A3	21	
A4	36	
B1	31	30.5
B2	29	
B3	38	
B4	24	
C1	22	30.0
C2	22	
C3	39	
C4	37	

The marks presented in Table 4 reveal notable differences in performance and perceptions among participants from the three schools. School A's participants scored between 21 and 36, with an average of 25.0, which is noticeably lower than the averages of Schools B and C, which are 30.5 and 30.0 respectively. This disparity suggests that participants in Schools B and C generally performed better on the reading comprehension assessment. These differences in scores appeared to be linked to participants' perceptions and engagement with the IRS.

4.1.5 Theme 4: Learner Attitudes

In this study, learner attitudes refer to the beliefs and evaluations that participants hold about reading, which influence their motivation and willingness to engage with texts (Sukarni, 2019). Attitudes towards reading play a crucial role in shaping motivation, engagement, and overall comprehension outcomes.

When asked whether they liked or disliked reading intensively for comprehension, participants' responses varied. For example, A1, B2, B3, C2, and C3 stated: *"I like to read."* Similarly, B4 emphasised: *"Yes, I like to read."* Furthermore, A4 replied: *"I read with interest not just for the sake."* In addition, B3 qualified their preference by stating: *"I like reading, but my reading depends*

on the introduction of the passage.” Conversely, C4 expressed a negative attitude: “*I don’t like to read,*” and A2 added: “*I don’t like to read, and I don’t participate.*” Supporting this view, A3 noted, “*I don’t like to read, I do better when we read in groups.*”

Regarding reading styles, participants also reported different approaches. A1 said:

I read in my heart to understand. I read for meaning, and I summarise what I have read in my own words.” Similarly, A2 explained: “*When one reads for the class, I read silently. As I read, I underline points and connect the passage to what I know.*”

These responses reveal a complex picture of participants’ attitudes towards reading comprehension. Positive attitudes, as expressed by the majority, appear to enhance motivation and engagement, which are critical for successful comprehension. However, the presence of negative attitudes among some participants suggests that not all participants were equally motivated or comfortable with intensive reading tasks. The variation in reading styles- silent versus loud reading also indicated diverse cognitive preferences and strategies among learners.

These findings align with Ajzen’s (1985) Theory of Planned Behaviour, which posits that attitudes significantly influence motivation and behaviour. Positive attitudes towards reading have been shown to enhance persistence, cognitive strategy use, and deeper comprehension (Huang, 2024). Conversely, negative attitudes can hinder engagement and reduce motivation, thereby impeding reading performance (Sukarni, 2019). Agregado (2024) further supports this by identifying internal attitudes and emotional states as critical factors affecting responses to Intensive Reading Strategies (IRS).

Participants’ responses demonstrated diversity in reading style: silent and loud reading. Silent reading involves internal cognitive processing that supports comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, while loud reading engages auditory mechanisms that aid pronunciation and fluency. The effectiveness of these styles depends on individual preferences and text characteristics, suggesting that a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate (Alharbi et al., 2015). Moreover, contextual factors such as the choice of reading materials and the learning environment also shape learner attitudes and engagement (Ahmad et al., 2021). Ma et al. (2015) emphasise that meaningful and appropriately challenging texts foster positive attitudes and better reading outcomes. This was

reflected in participants' appreciation for teacher guidance, as noted by A1, who highlighted the benefit of summarising texts in their own words.

Empirical studies further corroborate these findings. Khazaal's (2019) found that IRS enhances comprehension and critical thinking by providing structured support. Similarly, Widyaasita et al. (2020) and Rajeki and Kurnia (2019) report that learners value the systematic nature of IRS, which aids vocabulary and grammar acquisition. These findings resonate with broader research indicating that positive reading attitudes mediate comprehension success (Hasan et al., 2023; Tisa et al., 2021). However, challenges remain. Three participants reported difficulties such as encountering "bombastic words" (A4), which hindered comprehension and contributed to negative attitudes. This supports Khazaal (2019) observation that comprehension difficulties can lead to disengagement. Additionally, feelings of boredom and lack of concentration highlighted the need for instructional strategies that actively promote engagement and motivation.

4.1.6 Theme 5: Benefits of IRS

The data collected from participants' interviews indicated several substantial benefits of IRS for reading comprehension. Participants reported enhanced understanding of content, improved vocabulary, and development of critical thinking skills. For instance, participant A1 stated: "*When I read, I learn new words and get to apply my knowledge,*" while participant C3 noted: "*I learn new words, ask for clarification from my classmates, and built on my knowledge.*" These declarations suggest that IRS not only facilitate vocabulary acquisition but also encourage collaborative learning and deeper engagement with texts. The positive attitudes towards IRS, such as recognising vocabulary acquisition, reflected favourable behavioural beliefs. For instance, A1's statement "*when I read, I learn words and get to apply my knowledge*" indicated a positive evaluation of IRS, which likely strengthened their intention to engage in this reading strategy. In addition, the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a behaviour were evident in the collaborative learning environment fostered by IRS. Participant C3's comment about asking classmates for clarification and building knowledge highlighted the influence of peer interaction and classroom community. This support could enhance motivation and reinforce the intention to participate actively in IRS activities.

Based on the findings from the interviews, it appeared that IRS's focus on shorter, detailed texts allowed participants to dedicate more time to understanding every aspect of the material, which

enhanced overall comprehension. The participants' use of dictionaries and peer discussions indicated that IRS promotes independent learning and a supportive classroom environment. Moreover, the engagement with complex vocabulary and sentence structures seemed to improve grammatical awareness and communicative skills. These aligned with existing literature. Nation and Macalister (2020) emphasise that IRS's focus on shorter texts enables participants to pay close attention to detail, thereby promoting a thorough understanding of reading material. Similarly, Agbevivi and Adogpa (2022) highlight that repeated exposure to vocabulary in varied contexts through IRS aids in effective vocabulary acquisition. Conversely, perceived behavioural control, which refers to the individual's perception of their ability to perform the behaviour, is supported by the participants' use of dictionaries and other resources to overcome challenges with complex vocabulary (Ajzen, 1985). This aligned with Khazaal (2019) who notes that grappling with complex vocabulary fosters independent learning and enriches the linguistic context, supports the participants' reported use of dictionaries and promotes peer collaboration. Furthermore, Wang (2017) underscores the role of collaborative learning in IRS, where peer interaction enhances comprehension and communicative competence.

In addition, awareness of sentence structure corresponded with the findings of Nation and Macalister (2020), who argue that analysing complex sentences through IRS leads to better grammar skills. Chang (2021) also supports this by noting that engagement with varied linguistic styles refines participants' ability to construct coherent sentences. Andres (2020) corroborate the holistic language development benefits of IRS, including enhanced written and oral communication skills, while Scrivener (1994) and Khazaal (2019) emphasise the reinforcement of grammatical competences through such detailed analysis.

4.1.7 Theme 6: Challenges of IRS

IRS is effective for enhancing comprehension, however, participants' responses revealed several challenges they face when engaging with IRS. They expressed difficulties with understanding complex texts. For example, C2 stated:

Some passages are difficult to understand, I read without any knowledge and idea and I am not even able to predict.

Similarly, A4 remarked: *"I sometimes read without understanding,"* while B1 noted: *"I do not get the exact meaning of the passage."* C4 echoed this sentiment: *"I do not understand the passage,*

and I am not able to read for meaning,” and C1 added: *“It is not easy for me to understand the text.”* These responses highlighted the cognitive challenges participants encountered, including problems with attention, memory, and critical thinking. Additionally, participants reported feelings of anxiety and lack of confidence. For instance, B2 admitted: *“I am not confident to read.”* Furthermore, vocabulary difficulties were frequently mentioned as a major barrier. A1 said: *“I come across difficult words which make the passage difficult to understand.”* A4 elaborated: *“I come across bombastic words and fail to understand what they mean,”* while A2 noted: *“I am not able to pronounce some words,”* and C1 added: *“It is not easy to guess meaning of some words.”* Lastly, some participants expressed motivational issues, with A3 stating: *“Reading is boring. I feel sleepy and lose concentration.”*

Based on the interview findings, it was evident that IRS, while effective for comprehension, could impose cognitive overload on participants, especially when texts were complex and vocabulary was unfamiliar. The participants’ frustrations and anxiety suggested that the demands of IRS might have exceeded their current reading abilities, leading to disengagement. Vocabulary challenges further compounded comprehension difficulties, as unfamiliar or “bombastic” words hindered the ability to grasp meaning. Moreover, motivational issues such as boredom and loss of concentration indicated that overemphasis on intensive reading might have reduced participants’ intrinsic interest in reading, potentially limiting broader reading experiences.

These analyses were supported by existing literature. Agbevivi and Adogpa (2022) and Nation and Macalister (2020) acknowledge that IRS can present challenges such as vocabulary difficulties and motivational problems. Hidayat et al. (2024) emphasise the importance of identifying these challenges to enable teachers to provide targeted support. The cognitive overload experienced by participants aligns with Prayuda’s (2023) findings that complex texts could have overwhelmed participants’ cognitive resources, affecting attention and critical thinking. Reading anxiety, as expressed by B2, was also recognised by Agbevivi and Adogpa (2022) and Nation and Macalister (2020) as a significant impediment to comprehension. Hidi and Anderson (2014) further explain that cognitive strain can lead to disengagement when participants feel overwhelmed by intensive analysis demands.

The challenges identified were supported through Ajzen’s (1985) Theory of Planned Behaviour, particularly the principle of perceived behavioural control. This principle refers to participants’

perception of their ability to successfully perform a behaviour, in this case engaging effectively with IRS. Participants' expressed low confidence and difficulty managing complex texts and vocabulary, such as B2's admission: "*I am not confident to read,*" thus reflecting a diminished perceived behavioural control. According to the theory, when participants feel they lack control or ability, their motivation and intention to engage with the behaviour decrease, which can lead to anxiety and disengagement. This theoretical perspective helps explain why some participants struggled with IRS despite its benefits and highlights the importance of enhancing participants' perceived control through scaffolding and support to improve their engagement and outcomes.

In addition, regarding motivation, Khazaal (2019) warns that excessive focus on IRS might reduce exposure to reading for pleasure, which is essential for lifelong learning. Miller (2018) supports this by noting that such overemphasis could diminish motivation, a concern echoed by A3's comment on boredom and loss of concentration. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) argue that without contextual connections and relevance, learners may develop only superficial understanding and struggle to apply knowledge, which could further reduce motivation. Psychological barriers, including performance pressure and fear of failure, are highlighted by Taembo (2023), who notes that anxiety can create a negative cycle of disengagement, as illustrated by B2's lack of confidence.

Furthermore, the critical role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension was well documented. McKeown (2019) explains that unfamiliar vocabulary is a major obstacle to understanding texts, which corroborates participants' reports of difficulty with "bombastic" words. This dual pattern recognising vocabulary growth as a benefit yet struggling with difficult words underscores the need for balanced instructional strategies that address vocabulary challenges while promoting comprehension.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings that emerged from this study, which were generated through semi-structured interviews with participants from three schools, and document analysis of the syllabus and scheme of work. Participants' data was analysed through inductive thematic analysis. Six themes that emerged directly from participants' responses were discussed, indicating an array of different views and experiences related to reading for comprehension.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the findings and discussion based on six themes that emerged directly from the participants' responses. This chapter provides a summary of the study and highlights how the research questions were addressed. Furthermore, the implications of the findings of this study are presented concluding with the recommendations.

5.1 SUMMARY

5.1.1 An overview on how the research questions were answered based on the literature and findings

This qualitative case study aimed to explore learners' perceptions towards IRS on reading for comprehension. This study was grounded on four research questions. Furthermore, a comprehensive review of literature was outlined in Chapter 2, based on the following research questions:

1. How is IRS implemented in Grade 10 ESL classrooms and what practices are employed for learners' engagement and comprehension?
2. How do Grade 10 ESL learners perceive IRS?
3. How do Grade 10 ESL learners perceive the role of their teachers in facilitating the implementation of IRS?
4. What benefits do Grade 10 ESL get and what challenges do they face in adopting IRS?

Furthermore, data was generated through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Below is a synopsis of how the research questions were answered based on the literature and the findings that emerged following the presentation of data.

5.1.2 How is Intensive Reading Strategy implemented in Grade 10 ESL classrooms and what practices are employed for learners' engagement and comprehension?

This research question aimed to discover how Grade 10 ESL learners at three selected secondary schools in Mafeteng implement IRS. The findings revealed that IRS in Grade 10 ESL classrooms

was implemented through a structured, multi-phase approach that included pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities. Therefore, it was discovered that pre-reading activities such as brainstorming, previewing text features such as titles and images, and vocabulary introduction were used to activate participants' prior knowledge and established a purpose for reading (Paran, 2003; Ali, 2022; Agbevivi & Adogpa, 2022). During the reading phase, strategies such as the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) and K-W-L charts encouraged participants to predict, question, and reflect actively, which fostered deeper engagement (Apriliana, 2022; Hassard & Dias, 2013). Moreover, peer discussions and reciprocal teaching methods further enhanced comprehension by promoting collaborative learning and peer interaction (Alfassi et al., 2009; Hidayat et al., 2023).

Additionally, post-reading activities such as comprehension questions, summarising, and reflective discussions consolidated understanding and extended participants' analytical skills (Setiyorini et al., 2022). Teachers also selected relevant materials which helped to sustain motivation and engagement throughout the process (Murray et al., 2020; Sharma, 2024). Furthermore, formative assessments embedded within daily instruction allowed teachers to provide real-time feedback, thus monitoring progress and adjusting instruction as needed (Behring & Laitusis, 2022). Therefore, successful implementation of IRS depended on the balance between intensive and focused reading as well as ongoing support, which together enhanced participants' competence and confidence.

5.1.3 How do Grade 10 ESL learners perceive Intensive Reading Strategy?

This research question aimed to explore learners' perceptions towards IRS. Their responses indicated that they hold positive perceptions of IRS, valuing its systematic and structured approach that improves their reading comprehension and analytical skills (Khazaal, 2019; Widyaasita et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2023). In particular, participants appreciated the opportunity to deepen their vocabulary and understand complex grammatical structures, which bolsters their overall language proficiency (Andreas, 2020). However, some participants reported feeling overwhelmed or anxious due to the demanding nature of IRS tasks, especially those with prior difficulties in reading (Prayuda, 2023; Hidi & Anderson, 2014). This indicate that emotional factors and anxiety can negatively affect engagement and motivation. Moreover, participants' perceptions were significantly influenced by the classroom environment and the level of teacher support they received (Agregado, 2024; Taembo, 2023). Hence, while many participants responded favourably

to IRS, variability in individual experiences underscores the need for differentiated instruction tailored to diverse learner needs and preferences (Alharbi, 2015).

5.1.4 How do Grade 10 ESL learners perceive the role of their teachers in facilitating the implementation of Intensive Reading Strategy?

This research question aimed to gain insights into how learners perceive the way their teachers implement IRS in the classroom. Based on the assertions of participants while being interviewed, participants generally regarded their teachers as pivotal to the effective facilitation of IRS. They valued teachers who provided clear guidance, scaffold difficult content, and foster a supportive and encouraging learning environment (Ali, 2022; Taembo, 2023). For example, the use of interactive techniques such as modelling reading strategies, guiding vocabulary instruction, and promoting group work enhanced comprehension and participant engagement (Hidayat et al., 2023). Furthermore, constructive feedback from teachers helped participants recognise their strengths and areas for improvement, contributing to greater learning confidence (Murray, 2016; Capaul, 2025). Conversely, when instruction was perceived as overly rigid or lacking in differentiation, participants might have experienced frustration and disengagement, diminishing the strategy's effectiveness (Prayuda, 2023). Therefore, the role of the teacher was not only to instruct but also to nurture a positive classroom culture that balanced challenge with empathy.

5.1.5 What benefits do Grade 10 ESL learners get and what challenges do they face in adopting Intensive Reading Strategy?

This research question aimed to explore whether learners benefit or encounter challenges while adopting IRS. Participants experienced several notable benefits when adopting IRS. Primarily, they developed expanded vocabulary through active engagement with complex texts and contextual learning strategies (Khazaal, 2019). Additionally, IRS improved their language proficiency, supporting mastery of grammatical patterns and expressive abilities both orally and in writing (Andreas, 2020). Moreover, participants benefited from increased motivation and confidence resulting from comprehension successes and collaborative learning environments (Wang, 2017). Critical thinking skills were also enhanced through prediction, questioning, and summarisation practices facilitated during IRS activities (Apriliana, 2022; Alfassi et al., 2009).

Nonetheless, challenges persist and must be acknowledged. For instance, some participants faced cognitive overload and anxiety due to the demanding nature of reading complex texts intensively (Prayuda, 2023; Hidi & Anderson, 2014). Moreover, an exclusive focus on IRS might have limited

opportunities for reading for pleasure, which was essential for fostering lifelong literacy and intrinsic motivation (Khazaal, 2019; Miller, 2018). Additionally, without connecting texts to broader contexts or personal experiences, participants might have developed surface-level understanding, reducing the practical applicability of their skills (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Andreas, 2020). Furthermore, emotional barriers such as fear of failure might impede engagement and learning persistence among some participants (Taembo, 2023). Therefore, a balanced approach that combines IRS with appropriate support, varied instructional methods, and an encouraging classroom environment is critical to overcoming these challenges and maximising learner success.

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in only three schools located in the town centre (urban area) of Mafeteng, with 12 participants (four from each school), thereby excluding other regions. Therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to other schools in Mafeteng district, specifically those in peri-urban and rural areas. Additionally, the study took place during the winter class sessions, which continued during the designated winter holidays towards the end of the normal academic session, thus limiting the duration of the study. The short study duration during the winter session may have affected participant engagement and performance, as participants may have been less focused or motivated outside the regular academic term. This temporal limitation could constrain the depth and applicability of the findings. Furthermore, none of the teachers from the three schools was able to provide their lesson plan (preparation books). Without access to lesson plans, I gained limited information about the intended curriculum, teaching objectives, and instructional strategies. This restricted the depth of analysis regarding the effectiveness of specific teaching approaches or the alignment between teaching plans and actual classroom practices. In addition, without comprehensive information on teaching plans and curriculum delivery, it was challenging to provide precise recommendations for improving instructional strategies.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

IRS implementation in Grade 10 ESL classrooms followed a structured reading process involving three phases: pre-reading (activating prior knowledge, setting reading purpose), reading (active engagement with the text through strategies like scanning, underlining, questioning), and post-reading (summarising, self-questioning). These phases align well with syllabus recommendations and support comprehension and learner engagement. In as much as the study focused on learners

as participants, I had to look into teachers' preparation books because teachers directly or indirectly influence learners' perceptions through the way they teach. For instance, teachers play a vital role as facilitators by scaffolding reading activities, guiding learners with texts and questions, and promoting interaction. However, the facilitation tends to be teacher-dominated with limited learner autonomy in strategy use. Teachers' lesson plans would have been of great importance; they would have helped me find out the teaching methods teachers use, paving a way towards appreciating how participants engage with them, leading to a better understanding of how teaching methods contribute to participants' perceptions towards IRS.

Furthermore, assessment methods across the three schools included diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, and mostly focused on tests and past examination papers. This assessment-driven approach may limit innovation and deeper comprehension. Participants' attitudes towards reading showed variability. Some reported liking reading and engaging positively with IRS strategies, but others expressed dislike, influenced by factors such as complex vocabulary or lack of motivation. Additionally, benefits of IRS included improved vocabulary acquisition, better understanding of sentence structure, development of critical thinking, and collaborative learning. On the other hand, challenges highlighted by learners included cognitive overload, difficult vocabulary, comprehension anxiety, and motivational issues.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings revealed in this study regarding the implementation and perception of Intensive Reading Strategies (IRS) in Grade 10 ESL classrooms, the following recommendations can be considered to enhance reading comprehension outcomes:

- The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) should provide support through continuous workshops for ESL teachers to scaffold reading while gradually fostering learner independence in using reading strategies. MoET should also implement reciprocal teaching techniques such as Directed Reading Thinking (DRT) and Know-Want-Learn (K-W-L) cycles led by learners to build self-regulated reading skills.
- Through continuous workshops, MoET should support ESL teachers to move beyond reliance on tests and past question papers by incorporating varied assessment forms such as creative projects, group discussions, and reflective journals. This can provide holistic evaluation of reading comprehension and motivate deeper engagement.

- The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) should equip teachers with training on effective IRS practices, formative assessment techniques, and strategies to foster learner autonomy to improve instructional quality and responsiveness to learner needs.
- Teachers should select reading texts that are engaging, contextually relevant, and appropriately challenging to sustain learner interest and positive attitudes. Teachers should implement a range of reading styles (silent, loud) and strategies to accommodate diverse learner preferences and abilities.
- Teachers should promote active engagement with vocabulary through context clues, dictionary use, synonym exploration, and collaborative discussions. They should also integrate rich vocabulary work as a core part of the structured reading process to support comprehension and language development.
- Teachers should provide targeted support for learners facing cognitive overload, anxiety, and difficulties with complex vocabulary. This might involve differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and creating a supportive classroom environment to reduce stress and build confidence.
- Teachers should encourage collaborative learning activities around IRS to facilitate peer interaction, discussion, and mutual clarification of challenging texts, fostering a sense of community and deeper understanding.
- The Heads of English Departments in the schools should strengthen coherence between syllabus guidelines, schemes of work, and classroom practices to ensure a consistent, structured approach to reading comprehension aligned with IRS principles.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This qualitative study aimed to explore Grade 10 ESL learners' perceptions towards the Intensive Reading Strategy (IRS). It was underpinned by Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour, which provided a valuable framework for understanding learners' attitudes and motivations towards IRS. Additionally, the study was guided by the interpretivist paradigm, emphasising the subjective experiences and meanings learners attach to their reading practices. Employment of inductive thematic analysis approach allowed the emergence of six themes: structured reading process, teacher as facilitator, assessment methods, learner attitudes, benefits of IRS, and challenges of IRS.

The findings revealed that IRS implementation in Grade 10 ESL classrooms was most effective when it incorporated a structured, interactive, and supportive multi-phase approach consisting of pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities. Participants benefited from preparatory activities that activated prior knowledge and introduced key vocabulary, interactive reading strategies fostering critical thinking and collaboration, and post-reading reflections that consolidated comprehension. The role of the teacher emerged as central in scaffolding learning, facilitating engagement, and nurturing a positive classroom environment. Participants generally perceived IRS positively, acknowledging its contribution to vocabulary development, language proficiency, and reading confidence. Nonetheless, cognitive overload and emotional challenges, such as anxiety and resistance, were also identified as barriers that affected learner engagement. These findings underscore the importance of teacher responsiveness in addressing diverse learner needs through differentiated instruction.

The study concludes that IRS holds considerable promise for enhancing reading comprehension and language skills among Grade 10 ESL learners when implemented with a thoughtful structure incorporating learner-centred teaching practices, and ongoing formative assessment. Equally, fostering learner motivation and addressing emotional barriers are critical for maximising IRS's effectiveness. The interpretative lens employed in this study provides rich insights into the lived experiences and perceptions of learners, emphasising the complexity and contextual nature of reading instruction in ESL settings.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview

Semi-Structured interview

- Briefly explain the purpose of the interview
- Assure confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Native Language: _____

- Can you describe how your teacher implements intensive reading strategy in class
- What specific activities or techniques do you find most engaging during intensive reading sessions?
- How do you read (silent/loud reading)?
- How do you feel about the intensive reading strategy in your English language- reading comprehension?
- How do you perceive your teachers' role in facilitating intensive reading?
- Can you provide examples of how your teacher supports you during intensive reading activities?
- Do you think your teacher enables/hinders your engagement with IRS?
- What benefits have you experienced from using IRS in your reading practices?
- What challenges do you face when using IRS, and how do you think these could be addressed?

Appendix 2: Document analysis

Document Analysis

PURPOSE: To analyse existing educational materials, lesson plans, and curriculum documents related to implementation of IRS in the classroom

Focus Areas:

- ❖ Review of English language syllabus to identify how IRS is integrated and the expected outcomes for learners.
- ❖ Examination of teachers' schemes
- ❖ Examination of teachers' guide and lesson plans to assess the instructional strategies employed by teachers when implementing IRS
- ❖ Analysis of learners work samples (e.g., reading comprehension exercises, vocabulary assessments) to evaluate the effectiveness of IRS in enhancing reading.
- How is intensive reading strategy structured in the scheme and record of work?
- How is a reading comprehension lesson prepared?
- What specific activities are included, and how are they designed?

Appendix 3: Proof of editing

To: The Supervisor – Prof M. Makumane
Department of Language and Social Education
Faculty of Education
NUL

Date: 08th September 2025

Re: Proof of language editing

This letter certifies that I read and edited Lebohang Mokote's Masters Dissertation titled: ***Exploring learners' perceptions towards Intensive Reading Strategy in reading for comprehension in selected secondary schools in Mafeteng.*** This ensured that the Dissertation meets the required standards of academic writing.

Sincerely,



Mahao Mahao (PhD)
Senior Lecturer - Department of Language and Social Education National
University of Lesotho mahaomahao05@gmail.com

Appendix 4: Turnitin™ report

Lebohang Mokote

Turn it in.docx

- Practice Assignment
- Postgraduate Studies 2024_25
- National University of Lesotho

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