

LITERACY THROUGH LITERATURE

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SYNOPSIS

In this study the state of research on literacy and literature has been looked into. The importance of literacy, the statistics of literacy and illiteracy internationally and locally have been revealed. It has been noticed that there is a high rate of illiteracy in South Africa which is attributed mainly to socio-political reasons.

Literature surveyed showed that although literacy is so important, there are still children who do not want to read, children who have attitudes towards reading although reading has been proven to be the only way that literacy could be sustained. Reading promotes literacy because when reading, vocabulary is gained and that enhances language development. Learning a foreign language is also easy if books in that particular language are read, which means, reading facilitates second language acquisition.

The study also indicates that, for children to become effective and engaged readers, they must have the skill and the will to read. For children to gain interest and the desire to read on their own they need to be motivated, and in this study a variety of motivational programmes have been indicated.

Having gained insight into the research done, general consensus reached by researchers on what should be adopted and implemented, with special reference to South Africa, has been revealed.

Lastly, based on the findings of the survey, conclusions are drawn, that the use of the school libraries and school library support services should be established in each and every school to support the reading development of children. The use of public libraries is another alternative for pupils with or without school libraries. The READ (Read, Educate and Develop)

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organisation, which is an organisation that fights illiteracy in South Africa, should be supported and be given an opportunity to utilise its expertise especially in disadvantaged communities.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Basic literacy refers to the ability to read and write and Cooper (1993:6) defines literacy as "an activity that involves all of the language arts, namely, reading, writing, speaking and listening with thinking being part of each of these elements." To support this definition MacGarry (1991:30) and Shillinglaw (1988:62) say that literacy is conventionally understood as the ability to decode and understand the graphic symbols people use to represent spoken language, it is an important type of mediated human communication. Shillinglaw (1988:62) points out that the essence of literacy is the ability to communicate, read and write, whilst MacGarry (1991:30) refers to literacy as a visual vehicle of language and thought acting both as a substitute and a supplement for speech.

According to Machet and Olën (1997:77) "literacy entails more than just decoding skills, it is a complex, constantly developing process that involves a wide range of skills, experience and understanding."

1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY

According to Meek (1982:13) literacy has two beginnings: one in the world, the other, in each person who learns to read and write. Literacy has two kinds of history: one, in the change and development over time of what counts as literacy; the other in the life histories of individuals who learn to read and write, and who depend on these skills as features of their lives in literate societies. Literacy implies the use of language as a tool for learning and thereby coping with change and modernisation (cf. paragraph 1.8.1).

Meek (1991:13) goes on to make people aware that it is impossible to understand literacy without referring to its history. This means that, the meanings of the word 'literacy' as a word and some of the situations where it is found in use, should first be unravelled. This will bring about understanding the nature of literacy, what is meant by the word 'literate', and why we are concerned about the literacy of our children. Parents and educators are concerned about children being literate because they know how important it is to the individual as well as to society.

MacGarry (1991:30) supports Meek (1991) by stating that economically research has proved that the literate person is less likely to encounter difficulties in securing and maintaining a job than one who is illiterate. Literacy facilitates the *economic value* of an individual as well as that of the society to which he belongs. Literacy is regarded by some researchers as an economic take-off especially in developing countries like South Africa.

MacGarry (1991) also sees literacy as important for *survival*, when he says that at home, at work or anywhere, a person can read warnings against danger, instructions on medicine bottles as well as contractual details governing one's working life. This is impossible for an illiterate person, who only relies on verbal warnings and instructions.

According to MacGarry (1991:35), literacy has a *personal-social value* because "the literate person is less handicapped in achieving self-esteem and feelings of adequacy. Adult illiterates have been forced into stratagems and evasions to cover up reading and writing inadequacies."

Researchers, Meek (1982) and MacGarry (1991) agree with one another that a literate person is more likely to have access to a variety of viewpoints relating to economic and social policies, therefore his/her potential for involvement in community affairs increases.

Having seen how important literacy is, there are still those people who cannot read or write, that is illiterates, and there are also aliterates, that is people who can read but will not read.

1.3 ILLITERACY

According to the World book encyclopaedia (1992:32) illiteracy refers to the lack of the ability to read and write. Shillinglaw (1988:63) sees illiteracy as a crippling educational disability because an illiterate is perpetually a stranger in a society of signs and notices, warnings, printed tickets, newspapers and other informational items. An illiterate person is vulnerable to exploitation since he is unable to explain the meaning of events occurring in his environment. Illiteracy causes poverty and even the industrial society is hampered in its development by an illiterate workforce. Research has shown that the rate of literacy and illiteracy differs from country to country.

1.3.1 Statistics

According to the World book encyclopaedia (1992:31) illiteracy among adults is exceptionally high in third world countries. In Mali roughly 95% of the adult population is illiterate and in Nigeria, Bangladesh, Haiti, Ethiopia and Pakistan 70% whereas in South Africa 40% of the population is illiterate. According to Olën and Machet (1997:88) 1991 figures reveal that 34,5% of all blacks in South Africa have not been to school while 45,2% completed primary school only. In the UNESCO statistical year book (1995) 43% of Africans are illiterate and despite all literacy projects world wide, illiteracy is on the increase because of rapid population growths in most countries. Projections for 1990 were 900 million illiterates in the world of whom 168 million were in Africa. Of all illiterates 54% are women. The high rate of illiteracy in South Africa is attributed to political and economic reasons.

Research proves that the countries with the highest levels of literacy are also the richest or most developed - countries like Japan, Russia, the United States and all the countries of Western Europe (The World book encyclopaedia, 1992:32).

1.3.2 The influence of illiteracy on people's lives

Generally, according to MacGarry (1991) the inability to read and write impedes the organisation of numerous public services like health and medical care. It also impedes the creation of political structures which is founded on popular consent and participation. Recent studies have pointed out that illiterate people are less likely to learn good health practices or improved farming techniques and are thus less productive.

A nation cannot even hold meaningful elections if large numbers of its citizens are unable to read about the candidates and related issues.

An illiterate suffers a great deal when there is reading and writing to be done at work, he is compelled to seek help from family or friends. "The number of jobs for illiterates is continually shrinking, and the person who remains illiterate is increasingly at risk of becoming or remaining unemployed or failing to advance (Salter & Salter, 1991:11).

Societal adjustment is also affected by illiteracy, because full participation in society requires extensive reading and writing. Peck (1988, in Salter, 1991) indicates that a new world opens up when an individual can participate in all the activities that need reading and writing in society, like obtaining a driver's licence, voting and banking. An illiterate person is embarrassed when he cannot read religious material in church or cannot read stories to his children.

Researchers agree unanimously that illiteracy affects a person's whole self-

concept as he is unable to fit into the mainstream of society because of his illiteracy.

The economy of the country is also affected by illiteracy because illiterates are less productive, and lost productivity hurts business profitability. Those illiterates who cannot find work not only detract from the potential gross national product, but add to welfare or unemployment insurance costs. Chronically unemployed people may resort to crime which will add to the financial burden of the judicial system and prisons.

Illiteracy has an effect on children because it tends to propagate itself in the next generation. The reason for this is that it is difficult for children from illiterate homes to get support from their parents. Parents are not role models as they cannot help with homework, so in that way illiterate parents tend to raise illiterate children.

Having seen how important literacy is, and how disadvantageous illiteracy is, it is important that children should be taught to read and write as early as possible. Children (pre-schoolers) should be introduced to reading by being read to and be told stories from books, as Huck, Hepler & Hickman (1993 :218) indicate that learning to read begins at home with children hearing stories while sitting on the parent's lap and seeing loved ones in their lives valuing books. Pre-school literacy enhances the child's love for books and increases his vocabulary as he points to pictures and names them or hears new words used in the context of the story. The language development of pre-school children is phenomenal; pre-occupation with words and sounds is characteristic of this age group. Hearing literature of good quality helps the child to develop his full language potential. As the young child is listening and enjoying stories, he is also beginning to learn to read. Through constant exposure to stories, the child learns about book handling, attitudes, concepts and skills and a positive attitude towards books is gained.

All this can only be achieved by reading literature which will set children free from the bondages of illiteracy.

1.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERATURE

Most children come to school with an idea of what a story is, especially if they have been read to regularly. They understand some patterns in texts and their school experience should begin by building on this knowledge.

Cooper (1993) indicates that the use of literature as a basis for literacy learning will capitalise on what most students know when they come to school and will expand upon those existing structures. Literature gives children meaningful texts so that they can learn to read by reading, hence the saying "we do not achieve literacy and give children literature, but we achieve literacy through literature" (Cooper, 1993:19). Literature emphasises the knowledge that children bring to school and it is easier for them to read and understand than texts created to meet grade-level standards. It creates fun and excitement which is needed for successful learning (cf. paragraph 1.8.4).

The value of literature for children is therefore seen in two perspectives: it gives personal value and is of educational value.

1.4.1 Personal values

Huck, Hepler & Hickman (1993:8) indicate that literature should be valued in our homes and schools for the enrichment it gives to the personal lives of children as well as for its proven educational contribution, like for instance, they mention that literature:

1.4.1.1 Provides enjoyment

Literature provides delight and enjoyment. It has been proven that much of what is taught in school is not particularly enjoyable, yet literature can educate and at the same time entertain. Children need to discover delight in books before they are asked to master the skills of reading. Learning to read becomes fun for children, they laugh and giggle as they listen to stories.

Sad books also bring a kind of enjoyment and some children love being frightened by a story. "A love of reading and a taste for literature are the finest gifts we can give to our children, for we will have started them on the path of a lifetime of pleasure with books" (Huck, Hepler & Hickman 1993:9).

1.4.1.2 Reinforces thinking

Hardy in Huck, Hepler and Hickman (1993) indicates that all our constructs of reality are in stories that we tell ourselves about how the world works. She maintains that narrative is the most common and effective form of ordering our world today. She goes on to say that in order to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future. Thinking in narrative form is characteristic of adult thought and is even more typical of children's thinking.

1.4.1.3 Develops imagination

Researchers, Morrow (1992) and Cooper (1993) agree with Huck, Hepler and Hickman (1993) that literature develops children's imagination and helps them to consider nature, people, experiences or ideas in new ways. Children love to discover secrets hidden in certain illustrations. They state that good writing may pique the child's curiosity just as much as intriguing art. Literature helps children to entertain ideas they never considered before. When reading, or listening to stories, they always ask themselves "what if" questions. Some books invite children to use their imagination to solve problems and to envision a better future for the world.

One of the values of fairy tales and myths, is the way in which they stretch the child's imagination because they offer new dimensions to the child's creative thoughts which would be impossible for him to discover entirely on his own.

1.4.1.4 Offers vicarious experiences

According to Meek (1982) children's literacy experiences gives them new perspectives of the world. Good writing can transport the reader to other places and other times and expand his life experiences. The reader feels connected to the lives of others as he enters an imagined situation with his emotions tuned to those of the story.

Literature provides vicarious experiences of adventure, excitement and sometimes of struggle. Whether reading takes them to another place, another time or an imaginary world, young readers will return home enriched. "Reading gets us out of our own time and place, out of ourselves, but in the end it returns us to ourselves a little different, and a little changed by experience" (Huck, Hepler & Hickman 1993:11).

1.4.1.5 Develops insight into human behaviour

Literature according to Morrow (1992:251) reflects life because it has the power to shape and give coherence to human experience. It may focus on one aspect of life, one period of time in an individual's life and so enable a reader to see and understand relationships that he had never considered. Literature is concerned with feelings and the quality of life. It can educate the heart as well as the mind. It can show children how others have lived and what became of them. As children gain increased awareness of the lives of others as they vicariously try out other roles, they may develop a better understanding of themselves and those around them. Through wide reading as well as living, the child acquires his perceptions of literature and life. Literature asks universal questions about the meaning of life and our

relationships with nature and other people. Children learn to understand the common bonds of humanity by comparing one story with another. Literature casts its light on all that is good, but it may also spotlight what is dark and debasing in human life.

1.4.2 Educational values

Huck, Hepler and Hickman (1993) and Cooper (1993) in their studies indicate that the characteristics of development in all children include the phenomenal growth of language during the pre-school years, hence they stress the following points:

1.4.2.1 Language development

Research has proved that if children are exposed to stories they are also exposed to natural language that continually help them develop and expand their own language structures. "Literature provides children with opportunities to experience many language structures and an ever-increasing vocabulary. Children become free to explore the meaning. The richness and the beauty of language is expressed in words, art, illustrations that expands the child's language, experiences, schemata and the foundation for constructing meaning" (Cooper, 1993:18). Reading aloud to children, discussing literature with them and allowing them to read independently are all positive influences on the child's language development. Listening to stories introduces children to patterns of language and extends vocabulary and meaning.

1.4.2.2 Writing abilities

It has been proven that exposure to good literature makes a difference in children's writing abilities. The role of literature is significant to the development of writing, because the development of composition in writing cannot reside in writing alone, but requires reading and being read too.

Therefore, it can be categorically stated that when children read books it exposes them to all facets of life through concepts gained from these books. The reader learns to look to literature for truth and wisdom, for aesthetic impact with respectful curiosity for the many faces of the human relationship, the foibles as well as the wonders of man, as he seeks meaning in existence.

Having seen how important stories and reading are to the promotion of literacy, teachers and parents are confronted with the problem that few children are motivated to read.

"Most children that are highly motivated readers are self-determining and they generate their own reading opportunities" (Gambrell, 1996:518). So the onus lies with parents, teachers and librarians to motivate children to read.

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Even though literacy is the most important life skill, children do not read.

This problem can be related to:

- the attitudes of the community
- dormant readers
- uncommitted readers
- unmotivated readers

This creates a serious problem as teachers have long recognised that the lack of reading skills is at the heart of many of the pervasive problems in teaching young children (Gambrell et al, 1996:518). This means that children need to be motivated to read and to become lifelong readers (cf. the importance of literacy, par.1.2).

1.6 THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to gain insight into the state of research and the consensus in the literature on:

1. language acquisition
2. second language acquisition
3. reading attitudes
4. motivation

and the influence that reading has on the above.

1.7 THE METHOD OF STUDY

Commercial databases like ERIC, LISA and South African studies have been searched to gather material and information on research that has been done on the aspects mentioned in paragraph 1.6. The information gathered will be analysed in relation to the aims of this study.

1.8 DEFINITIONS

1.8.1 Literacy

Basic literacy refers to the ability to read and write and Cooper (1993:6) states that "literacy is conventionally understood as the ability to decode and understand the graphic symbols people use to represent spoken language, it is an important type of mediated human communication." He goes on to say that "it is a visual vehicle of language and thought acting both as a substitute and a supplement for speech" (cf. paragraph 1.2).

1.8.2 Reading

Bullock (1975:81) defines reading as an ability to respond to letters and

spelling patterns, converting them from print into spoken form. It is more than a reconstruction of the authors' meanings. It is the perception of those meanings within the total context of the relevant experiences of the reader, it is a much more active and demanding process. The reader is required to engage in critical and creative thinking in order to relate what he reads to what he already knows, to evaluate the new knowledge in terms of the old and the old in terms of the new relevant experiences of the reader, it is a much more active and demanding process. It includes all the intellectual and affective processes that take place in response to a printed text. Alexander and Filler (1976:1) define reading as "a process of translating signs and symbols into meanings and incorporating new meanings into existing cognitive and affective systems. In addition to cognitive skills and affective components, attitudes are also involved."

Reading can also be seen as a process in which the pronunciation of words give access to their meanings; the meanings of the words add together to form the meanings of clauses and sentences and the meanings of sentences combine to produce the meanings of paragraphs.

1.8.3 Reading attitudes

Reading or not reading depends on the attitude the reader has towards reading. Fishbein and Cyzil (1975) in Kear and Ellsworth (1995:934) define attitude generally as a "learned pre-disposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object." It can be conceptualised along a continuum with positive and negative extremes. Attitude is a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation. Reading attitudes go hand in hand with reading interests. Attitudinal hierarchies range from general to specific. This statement is supported by Alexander and Filler (1976:1) when they say that reading attitudes have been considered to consist of a system of feelings

related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation. He goes on to say a learner's reading attitudes may vary with his personal pre-dispositions and may be affected in unique ways by variables within the learner and his environment.

1.8.4 Children's literature

According to Bester and Osborne (1991:171) children's literature consists of those books which by a consensus of adults and children were assigned to the children's shelves. They are those books that appear on the children's list of the publisher. Children's literature may also be defined as those books which are specifically written for children and intended to be read as literature and not only for information and guidance (Egoff, 1981:1). Darton (1982:1) defines children's literature as "works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure, and not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good, nor to keep them profitably quiet." It is literature that should not be distanced from the main literature, but it should be seen as emanating from the main body of literature. Children's literature is often written and published with expectations that children will read it. Grown-ups also find pleasure and enjoyment in reading it. Hence it is true that a good book for children is a good book for everybody.

1.8.5 Reading motivation

Reading motivation as defined by Garber (1983:107) is a feeling created within the reader, one that can be elicited and positively re-inforced by teachers, it is a desire that needs to be met. Reading motivation can be intrinsic (from within or self-motivation) or extrinsic (caused by someone or other factors).

1.9 THE PLAN OF STUDY

Chapter 1 : Orientation and overview

Chapter 2 : Language acquisition

Chapter 3 : Second language learning

Chapter 4 : Reading attitudes

Chapter 5 : Motivation

Chapter 6 : Conclusion

Bibliography



CHAPTER 2

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the importance of literacy, the effects of illiteracy, and the importance of literature have been discussed. It is evident that children need to read, as literacy could be sustained through reading. In order for a person to be called "literate" he must be able to communicate freely in a particular language, and this occurs when he has acquired vocabulary which could be constructed in such a way that the language could be well understood. Reading can have a positive influence on vocabulary and language acquisition. For effective language acquisition contact with literature should be started in the early formative stages of the child's development.

2.2 LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The impact of a literature-based-program on literacy achievement is an important issue. "Children's literature is looked upon as an important source for instruction" (Morrow, 1992:251). She indicates that children who are exposed to literature at a younger age tend to develop sophisticated language structures, vocabulary and syntax, which indicates that both language development and reading success can be improved by regular exposure to literature especially children's literature. Children gain knowledge, discover how language works and they also get to know how written language differs from spoken language. As the child listens to and later reads literature he gains more vocabulary, thus developing the language.

MacDonald and Cornwall (1995) have proved that for a child to be competent or fluent in a language he needs to learn new words, master them and be able to use them. They also indicate that in our highly verbal culture, an accurate understanding of the meanings of words is a necessary pre-requisite for reading with meaning. Their research proves that vocabulary tests can serve as an effective measure of general intelligence, and most good intelligence tests contain many vocabulary items. An essential for comprehension in reading is an understanding of the words used by the author. "Vocabulary development is related to reading comprehension skills during high school" (MacDonald & Cornwall, 1995:525).

Huck, Hepler and Hickman (1993) state that vocabulary seems to grow as children spend time with literature. Statistics indicate that children in third grade and above, learn the meanings of about 3 000 new words each year and it is assumed by researchers that many of these new words are acquired by children in the context of their reading. They confirm that reading aloud to children, discussing literature with children and children's independent reading are all positive influences on child language development.

"Studies showing that reading enhances literacy development lead to an uncontroversial conclusion, that reading is the only way children can become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and the only way to become good spellers" (Krashen, 1993:23). Krashen (1993) also indicates that reading aloud is not only good for vocabulary development in the pre-schools, but even at secondary and tertiary level, children who are read to regularly for several months make superior gains in reading comprehension and vocabulary as well. Even short-term studies show significant increases in vocabulary knowledge after just a few hearings of stories containing unfamiliar words. Vocabulary development goes hand in hand with language development and this process starts before the child starts school. As the child acquires more vocabulary, he

learns how to use it, and tends to develop more in language skills.

Cohen (1968) as quoted by Morrow (1992) says that language development correlates with reading success and that both can be improved by regular exposure to children's literature.

2.2.1 Acquiring language

There are different ways in which a child can be brought into contact with language and a few of these possibilities will be discussed below.

2.2.1.1 Pre-literacy

According to Huck, Hepler and Hickman (1993) the potential for the language development of children at 18 months is phenomenal; pre-occupation with words and sounds of language is characteristic of very young children. Books will help to fulfill the desire to hear and learn new words. Hearing literature of good quality helps children to develop their full language potential. Parents are expected to start reading stories to their children as early as possible, because it is believed that a young child who has the opportunity to hear and enjoy many stories is also beginning to learn to read. Through constant exposure to stories and books, children develop some early concepts about print, such as attitudes and skills which include the form and structure of written language. All this learning occurs at the pre-reading stage, it is what Holdaway in Huck, Hepler and Hickman (1993) refers to as "emergent level of reading", and it is essential for later success in reading. In order for children to develop in reading and writing, they need regular exposure to children's literature which provides them with new words.

Olën (1990:386) recommends story telling by parents, child minders, librarians and teachers as one of the best techniques to expose children to literacy. She also indicates that it is only if everyone makes some con-

tribution and more people become aware of the importance of telling stories and reading books to young children that there may be a greater increase in literacy. Public libraries and the READ organisation are playing a major role in story telling programmes to pre-schoolers.

Pre-school literacy as indicated by Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini (1995) is often regarded as the most important activity for developing the knowledge required for eventual success in reading. Interest in the ways in which parents help their children to develop the required language skills for reading has grown. In many countries the importance of the family in promoting literacy is operationalised in the inter-generational nature of the literacy program. Lemmer (1989) has stated that the number and the nature of parent-child joint book reading experiences during early childhood are assumed to set the stage for future differences in academic achievement, and this could be achieved through:

- **Book reading**

Book reading brings children into touch with story structures and schemes as well as literacy conventions which are pre-requisites for understanding texts. Mason and Allen (1986) in Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini (1995:2) say that "reading books to children exposes them to the written language register." Grammatical rules for spoken and written language may be the same, but the use of the options that grammar offers turns out to be quite different in speaking than in writing. Children learn how to use and understand the written language register prior to learning the mechanical skills of encoding and decoding print. Younger and less experienced children recite books with a wording and an intonation appropriate for oral situations, whilst older and more experienced children use language that was worded increasingly like written language and like the text of the book itself. Book reading contributes to the early linguistic developments by confronting children very intensively with the written language register. Krashen (1993) agrees with

Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini (1995) that book reading increases children's knowledge of the written language register and their reading achievements. It has a stronger effect on the more proximal measures of language development. Reading books to young children makes an important and indispensable contribution to their learning to read.

- **Book sharing**

Book sharing is a method whereby pupils could acquire language skills through reading. Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini (1995) have studied the way in which parents share books with young children and they discovered that one of the first language patterns or frames that a parent and child develop is in relation to sharing a picture book. Parents use a consistent language pattern when labelling objects in a picture. The parent points at the picture and names it, then the child imitates. Both participants' attention will be jointly focused on the pictures and words that stay the same for each reading, therefore, the child can predict the story and build up a vocabulary over numerous readings. In book sharing, research has revealed that from eight months to 18 months, the parent supports the child's dialogue and adjusts his comments as the child gradually participates more - this is called "scaffolding" or supporting the child's language growth. The parent uses stress and intonation as he reads and speaks, so as to familiarise the child with new syntactic forms. The child should also take an active language role, to ask questions and test his own predictions. At school, Lemmer (1989); Elley and Mangubhai (1983) have shown shared reading to be successful in the elementary classes. To ensure that all of the group can see the text and illustrations, the book is normally 'blown up' or rewritten in the form of a giant book, with suitably sized illustrations, then children are encouraged to join in and read the easier sections with the teacher. This method encourages children to participate in discussion. Children are able to predict and confirm events in the story, by so doing children are constantly striving for meanings of words. Elley and Mangubhai (1983:56) emphasise the point

that if children enjoy the experience, they will want to read often, in class groups, in small groups, in pairs or as individuals. They will therefore be able to master the written language in the book with a minimum of pressure and strain, because new learning of the language takes place at the point of interest. According to Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini (1995:1) the number and the nature of book sharing experiences during early childhood are assumed to set the stage for future differences in academic achievement.

2.2.2 Using picture books

For pre-scholars and elementary classes wordless picture books are recommended by many researchers for language acquisition. According to Lemmer (1989:21) "wordless picture books aid children in developing many essential pre-reading and book processing skills like story construction through sequential thinking, predicting outcomes, inferential thinking, visual discrimination and page-turning." Huck, Hepler & Hickman (1993) agree with Lemmer (1989) that in wordless picture books, the pictorial prompts provided by wordless books promote expressive language skills through strategies such as, the creating of group dialogues and stories in oral and written form. Such approaches help children to experience the interrelated nature of speaking, listening, reading and writing in that particular language. The child sees the picture, asks questions about the picture, and uses vocabulary in creating his own text, hence Huck, Hepler & Hickman (1993 :241) refer to wordless picture books as a useful bridge to reading skill.

According to Lemmer (1989:21) picture books are normally neglected at upper levels of education because there is an assumption that picture books are for the innocent early years only, thereafter children are to be steered away from pictures into the more demanding world of print. Lemmer (1989) says that this deprives children in the post-reception years of story motivation, a bridge to reading skills acquisition, exposure to challenging

picture books, valuable stimulus material and contexts for language development tasks, opportunities for acquiring visual and screen literacy. Picture books contribute a lot in language acquisition because they provide the means of acquiring confidence in books, reading motivation by identifying and naming objects in the pictures. "The new-style picture book for older reading opens up such opportunities for discussion and deeper understanding" (Lemmer, 1989:22). Picture books undoubtedly represent a vast and inspirational resource which uniquely presents a story via a combination of pictorial and verbal modes. They can provide stimuli and teaching contexts for the development of linguistic and visual literacy for all ages.

Huck, Hepler & Hickman (1993:211) emphasise the point that picture books are particularly useful in stimulating language development through encouraging children to take an active part in story telling. They also indicate that, as the child relates the story, he becomes aware of beginnings, endings, the sequence of the story, the climax and characters. All these are necessary for learning how a story works for developing a sense of story. Even teachers may want to record children's stories into language experience booklets. Older children might want to write their own creative stories to accompany the illustrations.

2.2.3 Using comic books

Comic books are valuable material for language development in upper classes. "Research done on comic book texts and on the impact of comic book reading on language development and school performance suggests that comic books are not harmful and there is considerable evidence that comic books can and do lead to more serious reading" (Krashen, 1993:50). Comic texts contain a substantial amount of reading volume. A child gets as much wordage of reading as he gets from even the fourth or fifth grade reader.

Krashen (1993) has also proved that those who continue to read comics after the early grades, are at least equal to non-comic readers in reading, language development and overall school achievement. An exclusive diet of comic books will probably develop adequate but not advanced levels of competence in language and literacy development. There is also evidence that light reading can serve as a conduit to heavier reading. It can help readers not only develop the linguistic competence for harder reading but can also develop an interest in books. Many case studies show that comic book reading can lead to additional book reading. This was proved by Lemmer (1989) and Krashen (1993) and these case studies supported the view that reading comics is the way many, if not most children learn to read, and get a taste of reading. Even reluctant readers feel motivated by comics. Comics bring appeal where all other printed matter has failed. Words learned in comics could be used in other reading material as well, and this acquired skill would then lure children beyond their level. Indeed comics motivate children to read more. Matabane in Krashen (1993) tells us that comic books made an important contribution to his acquisition of English and his desire to read. He says that comic books helped to bring his English to a level where he could begin to read and appreciate English books, this means that comics lead directly to the printed materials. The texts of comics as revealed by Krashen (1993) are linguistically appropriate, and pictures can help make the texts more comprehensible. They have no negative effect on language development and school achievement, and serve as a conduit to book reading and therefore can lead to literacy.

According to Lemmer (1989:21) there are fairly sophisticated comic format books that attest to the need for picture books that can appeal to and challenge the older reader. Even wordless picture stories found in comic books are such an aid in developing many essential pre-reading and book processing skills like story construction through sequential thinking, predicting outcomes, inferential thinking, visual discrimination, page turning, left to right

and top to bottom reading. The pictorial prompts provide ideal means for promoting expressive language skills through strategies such as creating of group dialogues and stories in oral and written form. Such approaches help children to experience the interrelated nature of speaking, listening, reading and writing i.e. literacy. "Studies showing that reading enhances literacy development lead to an uncontroversial conclusion. Reading is the only way children can become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and the only way to become good spellers" (Krashen, 1993:23). People acquire language by understanding messages or obtaining comprehensible input in a low anxiety situation - that is what free voluntary reading is all about.

2.2.4 Silent reading

In silent reading the teacher displays the books attractively, reads them aloud regularly, and then the children spend 20-30 minutes each day in sustained silent reading, with books of their own choice. The rationale as stated by Elley and Mangubhai (1983:59) is that children best learn to read by reading as often as possible. Children enjoy silent reading especially if there is no book report required and no written exercises performed. Silent reading consolidates the structures and vocabulary taught in the oral lessons. Through reading silently children learn new structures from relatively uncontrolled materials, provided there is the support of cues from pictures, absorbing context and teacher guidance. Children read for enjoyment and practice, they practice pronunciation and intonation silently at their own pace. Huck, Hepler & Hickman (1993:728) say that "to become fluent readers, children need to practice reading from books that capture their interest and imagination, and if we want children to become readers, we must re-order our priorities and provide time for children to read books of their own choice, at their own pace."

2.3 CONCLUSION

From this discussion it is clear that the language skills of pupils improve from reading because as pupils read, they gain more vocabulary, they learn how the language is spoken and written, and they do this leisurely at their own pace. Davis (1995:335) summarises the benefits as:

- **Reading attitudes**

When pupils are exposed to reading they become more positive about starting new texts, their imaginative responses improve as well as their personal engagement with what they read, their overall comprehension skills improve and normally find it easier to read in other subjects. Above all, children tend to see it as a pleasurable, rather than a stressful activity.

- **Language skills**

With language skills, pupils develop a wider active as well as passive vocabulary. They tend to use more varied sentence structures and become better at spotting and correcting grammatical mistakes in their writing and speaking. As children improve in their writing skills they become more confident and fluent in speaking the language.

- **Personal growth**

With book reading, pupils develop a wider knowledge of the world and an increased understanding of other people. They learn to use thinking skills more effectively and their imaginative scope increases as they become more matured intellectually. Reading leads to general language competence, and all this is done in a more relaxed and pleasurable environment.

In conclusion, it could be said that reading enhances vocabulary and language development from pre-literacy to the upper levels of education. Wordless books, picture books and story books are more effective in pre-school, whilst

novels and comics, are recommended for older children. Children who have acquired language through reading, do not experience communication problems in that particular language, they become literates through the use of literature.



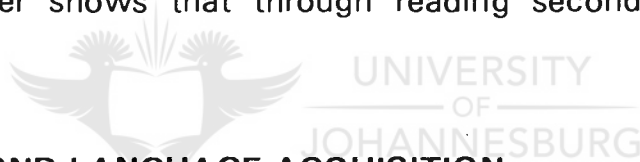
CHAPTER 3

SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the importance of literature for language acquisition has been discussed. Once vocabulary has been mastered, children use the new words to develop their language. They become able to speak the language fluently, to read and to write - they become literate.

This chapter shows that through reading second language learning is possible.



3.2 SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

It is understood that a child first learns to speak his mother tongue, then when he starts school, in South Africa which is a multilingual country, a second language is introduced. Ellis (1985:6) describes second language acquisition as "the subconscious or conscious processes by which a language other than the mother tongue is learnt in a natural or a tutored setting. It covers the development of phonology, lexis, grammar and pragmatic knowledge, but has been largely confined to morphosyntax. It investigates empirically, how a learner performs when he uses a second language."

Elley and Mangubhai (1983) in their investigation about second language acquisition have noticed that second language is learnt so laboriously and ineffectually in the classroom, yet so readily when the learner is part of a community that speaks the language. With regard to this statement, they

both agree that recent case studies of second language learners suggest that second language acquisition in naturalistic contexts has much in common with first language acquisition, and they recommend that repeated exposure to high interest illustrated story books in the target language will produce rapid second language acquisition.

According to Elley and Mangubhai (1983:54) second language learning can be effective if strategies derived from understanding of first language learning are used. These strategies include the total immersion in second language from school entry, partial immersion and prolonged passive exposure before oral expression. Hough, Nurss & Enright (1986:510) exclaim that "the challenge today for all teachers of linguistic minority pupils is to capitalise on children's diverse linguistic and cultural experiences in order to introduce them to their new language and culture and to provide them with full access to the education system." To meet this challenge, activities and instructional techniques are needed, and one of those which is highly recommended by most researchers is:

3.2.1 Story reading

All children find story reading with adults pleasurable. Elley and Mangubhai (1983) and Hough, Nurss & Enright (1986) state that it is an important second language acquisition tool, because it increases the efficiency of second language learning which could be attempted profitably through the use of an abundance of high-interest, illustrated story books printed in the target language. When children read such story books they are engaging themselves in an activity which reduces the effect of first and second language differences. The reading of story books play a dominant role in determining what language children learn, when they learn it, and how they learn it. "High interest story books provide a basis for language learning which goes a long way to bridge the gap between first and second learning

contexts" (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983:56). Good story books provide strong intrinsic motivation for children and an emphasis on meaning rather than form. When read often, these books increase exposure to the target language, and they become the basis for discussion about the pictures and story. Techniques could be used for effective second language acquisition such as:

- **Free voluntary reading**

Elley and Mangubhai (1983) and Krashen (1993) suggest that one of the most successful and economic ways of achieving second language acquisition and development is through free voluntary reading. Olën and Machet (1997:85) indicate that in South African schools, the teaching of reading has largely focused on skills, strategies and the processes individual readers acquire and use as they interact with a piece of text. Many teachers are not convinced of the value of using free voluntary reading to complement traditional language teaching. Free voluntary reading according to Krashen (1993:10) refers to "reading because you want to." He regards it as one of the most powerful tools available in language education and the most effective way of achieving proficiency in a second language. "Just as spelling and vocabulary are developed in first languages by reading, so too they are developed in second languages" (Olën & Machet, 1997:85). They also indicate that free voluntary reading is the most important determinant of vocabulary development, writing competence and the ability to comprehend and utilise advanced grammatical structures.

- **Reading aloud**

Research has proved that children who have been read to learn to read better and with fewer problems when they go to school. According to Olën (1990:382) "the activity of reading aloud stimulates children's interest, emotional development, imagination, develops the children's vocabulary and makes them to be more sensitive to language." At the same time it prepares

children for formal education.

Reading aloud to young children according to Hough, Nurss & Enright (1986:510) has been advocated as a natural device for promoting oral language development and initiating monolingual children into literacy. Cochran-Smith (1983), Holdaway (1979) and Teal (1982) in Hough, Nurss & Enright (1986:511) agree with each other that early adult-child interactions with books help children develop concepts, oral fluency, sense of story and literacy set. Frequent reading of stories to pupils helps them to acquire that particular language, to figure out grammar and to make predictions. Reading aloud and talking about books give pupils an opportunity to apply their common language learning strategies. When children are read to, they get an opportunity of hearing a variety of fiction and non-fiction books, and they go through what Ervin-Tripp (1974) in Hough, Nurss & Enright (1986:511) calls "a silent period of second language acquisition." During this period their primary task is to develop their receptive second language skills in preparation for expressing themselves later. Lemmer (1989) and Elley (1983) also support the statement that story reading facilitates second language acquisition because children participate by watching and listening to the teacher and other children as they ask and answer questions or comment on the story. Questions asked by pupils, allow the pupils to build meaning and to acquire the language. They can also use the same questions asked to them in their own situations.

Provoking questions during story reading that are asked by the teacher or parent encourages pupils to predict what is next, use their imaginations, and think about cognitive uses of language, expand the child's second language and thinking skills. These questions are particularly useful for pupils learning a language which is not their mother tongue. Hough, Nurss & Enright (1986:513) recommend repeated hearing of the same story as they say that it "reinforces vocabulary and language patterns and establishes the sequence

ably through the use of an abundance of high-interest, picture books printed in the target language. When children read such picture books they are engaging themselves in an activity which reduces the effect of first and second language differences. Picture books assist children to learn naturally, form context and provide excellent models of the written language.

In the previous chapter, the influence of picture books in first language acquisition has been discussed. Even with second language acquisition, Lemmer (1989) and Hough, Nurss & Enright (1986) state that picture books are a rich resource for second language learning, because they provide an additional means of acquiring confidence in and familiarity with books together with reading motivation via fruitful entertainment. According to Lemmer (1989:21) "because picture books demand aesthetic modes of response, they provide an ideal means of encouraging both intrinsic motivation and social solidarity during that difficult time when a gap exists between the kinds of stories that children need and the means for independent access to them that they are still struggling to acquire."

Picture books provide a useful bridge to reading skills, for instance, narrative grammars of picture books often contain repetitive structures and opportunities for participation. They attempt to maintain constant focus on constructing the meaning throughout the process and are always seeking the most direct path to meaning. According to Lemmer (1989:23) through picture stories, pupils can be exposed to quality books that are both accessible and challenging. Lemmer (1989) agrees with Hough, Nurss & Enright (1986) that, there is a number of picture books where the stories told by text and paintings contain resonances and dimensions that can open up psychological, social, moral, political and literary questions and awareness. Picture books are known to be a classroom resource that can provide contexts at all levels for integrated second language work through group discussions, listening and reading activities and writing spin-offs. Hough,

Nurss and Enright (1983:514) state that well-illustrated books with clear colourful illustrations help to clarify the meaning of and sustain attention to the text for all young children. Such books are very helpful to pupils trying to make sense of the language being read. Well illustrated books provide additional context for children to use during the story reading. Such books help pupils understand and acquire second language and concepts:

3.3 EXTENSIVE READING

The older child should be encouraged to read extensively. Research has proved that pupils gain more information when they read on their own, at their own pace, and decipher words on their own, and this could be achieved through extensive reading. According to Davis (1995:329) "an extensive reading programme is a supplementary class library scheme attached to a specific language course, in which pupils are given the time, encouragement and materials to read pleasurably at their own level, as many books as they can without the pressures of testing or marks."

Extensive reading is an activity that provides a learning environment within which learners have access to large quantities of written material in the second language for personal interest reading. Extensive reading as suggested by Krashen and Terrell (1983:131) may also be a source of comprehensible input in a second language. They also indicate that extensive reading practised for second language acquisition would differ from the more frequently practised intensive type of reading. The difference being in the amount of second language material, as well as the intensity with which the material is studied. In intensive reading activities learners are in the main exposed to relatively short texts which are used either to exemplify specific aspects of the lexical, syntactic or discoursed system of the second language or to provide the basis for targeted reading strategy practice. On the other hand extensive reading exposes learners to large quantities of

meaningful and interesting second language material, which in the long run produce a beneficial effect on the learner's command of the second language. Nuttall (1982) in Hafiz and Tudor (1989:5) claims that extensive reading is the best way of acquiring proficiency in a language whilst Wilkins (1972) in Hafiz and Tudor (1989:5) maintains that,

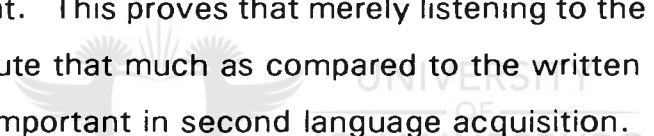
"Through reading, the learner is exposed to the lexical items embedded in natural linguistic contexts and as a result they begin slowly to have the same meaningfulness to him that they have for the native speaker."

Comprehensible input gained in reading may contribute to a general language competence that underlies both spoken and written performance. Research has shown that children who have practised extensive reading had made a substantial improvement in receptive skills. An input-based and acquisition-oriented mode of learning can lead to an improvement in learner's linguistic skills in a second language as regards reading and writing. Extensive second language input in a tension-free environment can contribute significantly to the enhancement of pupils language skills both receptive and productive. Pupils tend to enjoy reading because in this type of activity they are competing against themselves, a teacher is a monitor or he motivates them just to ensure that the maximum number of books are being read in the time available. The catchwords are quantity and variety, rather than quality. Non-fiction, teenage magazines are included but fiction predominates. According to Davis (1995:335) any second language classroom will be the poorer for the lack of an extensive reading programme of some kind, and will be unable to promote its pupils' second language development in all aspects as effectively as if such a programme was present. This is true of every level whether primary, secondary or tertiary, but is particularly true at lower secondary where there is time for extra reading, without the pressure of public examinations. Extensive reading promotes second language acquisition, because as pupils read, they gain more vocabulary, they learn

how the language is spoken and written, and this they do leisurely at their own pace.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it could be stated that reading literature helps readers to acquire all the concepts necessary to understand or comprehend the language that is not their own. Highly illustrated story books arouse interest and assist in matching the words with pictures, thus assisting in vocabulary gaining and word recognition. Children who are read to, have an opportunity in developing their receptive second language skills, they develop concepts, oral fluency and literacy skills. All this will lead to general second language competence which was achieved in a more relaxed and pleasurable environment. This proves that merely listening to the spoken language does not contribute that much as compared to the written language. Therefore, reading is important in second language acquisition.



CHAPTER 4

READING ATTITUDES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters the importance of reading for first and second language acquisition have been discussed. But, for children to read or not to read depends on their attitude they have towards reading. What then, is reading attitude?

4.1.1 Reading attitude

In spite of the values of reading referred to in paragraph 1.4, the fact is that most children do not read voluntarily because of some factors that cause them to have negative attitudes towards reading (cf. also paragraph 1.8.3).

4.2 FACTORS THAT HINDER READING

4.2.1 The attitude of the community

"Research has pointed out how unfavourably the school child who spends much of his time in reading is regarded, not only by his fellow pupils, but also by his teachers and even his parents" (Coetzee, 1983:66). This negative attitude of the social group makes the child to become reluctant to reading or aliterate. Norman-Jackson (1982) emphasises the importance of the child's immediate environment on his reading development.

Beers (1996:31) names three types of aliterates.

4.2.1.1 Dormant readers

This refers to readers who like to read, but do not read, they are always too busy to read. They see reading as an experience that can be relaxing and exciting, one that gives ideas to wonder about, but they feel it takes up a lot of time. Their excuses for not reading are that they are busy and have no time to read; they even compare themselves to plants which become dormant at a certain period, to them reading could be an activity done during holidays. Even avid readers occasionally become dormant when they have to write tests, when they are stressed or excited. They like talking about books but have no time to read.

4.2.1.2 Uncommitted readers

These readers do not want to read, but they always hope that they will be readers in future and use the words, "I might be a reader someday." Beers (1996:31) describes them as readers who do not read. They do not enjoy reading; they see it as only looking at a lot of words, understanding them or figuring out words and meanings and comprehension. For uncommitted readers, reading is a skill which is for people with a peculiar attitude or stance. Uncommitted readers react positively towards students who enjoy reading, they are hoping, although they are not sure whether they will be readers in future or not. Amongst these uncommitted readers some do not enjoy reading, they claim it is boring. Beers (1996) in his research has proved that sometimes a child who is experiencing counter-actions, who feels that he may not be successful in the eyes of individuals loses self-confidence and trust in himself and may try to avoid the reading act. Self-concept re-inforcement is another cause of being an uncommitted reader. Beers (1996:32) indicates that this occurs when a child looks down upon himself, sees himself as a failure already, he sees no need for reading, he believes he will not succeed in reading because of some previous

experiences, that child may actually not succeed. A low self-concept is built up in the child by this continuous failure, and this results in a negative attitude towards reading.

4.2.1.3 Unmotivated readers

These readers are those who have internalised the point that they will never like reading. Gambrell (1996:518) and Beers (1996:32) define these types of readers as readers who see reading as looking at sentences, answering questions for the teacher, looking at words and closing the book.

These readers approach reading events (school related ones) with an attitude, whereby according to Roseblatt in Beers (1996:31) the reader's attention is focused primarily on what will remain as the residue after reading (the information to be acquired); the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out. It is non-aesthetic reading. Such readers express negative attitudes, they have no intention of reading in future. When asked to read they will always take out the same book and never proceed to the next page. To them reading is boring because they do not see images in their minds, therefore they are automatically turned off. To these readers, reading does not solve problems. Inability to picture the action or characters results in unmotivated readers, and unmotivated readers do not find any pleasure in reading, they therefore commit themselves to not reading (Beers 1996). Other major factors that refrains children from reading voluntarily will now be discussed.

4.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS READING ATTITUDES

4.3.1 Socio-economic and/or political factors

Research done by Olën and Machet (1997) indicates that in South Africa many parents are illiterate and do not have the discretionary income to enable

them to afford to buy books for their children. They opt out of the child's education not because of disinterest but because they feel that they have nothing to give the child that will be of value. Many children are no longer experiencing the rich oral culture of story telling, which is most important to preliteracy experience. These children are deprived of any form of story telling. Thembela (1982) in Machet and Olën (1997:78) has identified the following as the socio-economic and political consequences of more than 40 years of apartheid:

- overcrowded and inadequate housing
- family disorganisation
- a high rate of illegitimacy
- malnutrition and child neglect.

All these factors have a negative effect on the literacy environment and reading attitude of the child.

4.3.2 Reading ability

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According to researchers, Coetzee (1983), McKenna (1995), Meek (1982) and Pilgrim (1968) attitudes are formed partly on the basis of beliefs about the outcomes of reading, for instance, it is natural to predict that poor readers who have reason to expect frustrating outcomes will tend to harbour more negative attitudes than better readers. Extensive evidence relates reading attitude to ability. This statement is supported by McKenna's model (1995) which proves that ability postulates a cumulative attitudinal impact on a child's reading experience. He also advises that early intervention in an effort to pre-empt reading may curb attitudinal decline. Although these researchers serve to document a relationship between ability and attitude, these studies cast little light on the cumulative effect of ability over time. These studies indicate that there is a child to whom reading has not yet become an easy skill, others even see fun-reading as a chore, therefore they develop a negative attitude towards reading. To substantiate this statement

Meek (1982:199) says that once such a child is given homework the inexperienced reader usually avoids reading homework because he does not know how information is organised to form a concept. He cannot link events to a generalisation without intermediate discussion. Inadequate reading ability prevents children entering into the reading process voluntarily and with enthusiasm. McKenna (1995) supports Pilgrim (1968) and Frank (1960) that word recognition, vocabulary acquisition, recognition of major points and supporting details and other similar comprehension skills also influence the ability to read. Meek (1982) and Pilgrim (1968) do agree with each other that many people who are apparently able to score well on tests which measure reading abilities, find difficulty in changing the written page into imagery which has meaning for them because of limited experience and stunted imaginative powers.

4.3.3 Gender

McKenna (1995:941) says that normative beliefs also play a formative role in the development of attitudes. He found that girls tend to possess more positive attitudes towards reading than boys. Gender differences have been observed from first grade on, differences towards recreational reading attitudes appear to increase with age. The situation is made more complicated by the fact that girls tend, as a group, to outperform boys on ability measures. Mullis, Campbell and Farstrap as quoted by McKenna (1995:941) agree with the statement when they say that it may be that cultural or societal beliefs cause many girls to harbour more positive attitudes towards reading than boys.

Although gender norms may not be universal across culture, encouraging a positive image of reading in the minds of boys may tend to offset the gender effect. If a child's cultural environment encourages a model and re-inforces reading, more positive attitudes should result. These societal beliefs lead

first to more positive attitudes towards reading in girls, which in turn facilitate an advantage over boys in acquiring ability, then this difference in ability helps to perpetuate more positive attitudes among girls.

4.3.4 Ethnicity

Ethnic group membership can also be expected to impose subjective norms about reading. Saracho and Dayton (1991) as quoted in McKenna (1995:942) reported that among a large sample of preschool children, African Americans tended to possess more negative attitudes than whites, and it is believed the same applies to black South Africans, because of the type of education received during the apartheid era, which made them to memorise without understanding. As indicated by these researchers, the possibility is that culturally transmitted beliefs may retard the development of positive reading attitudes and that deserves more thorough examination. Ethnicity, as shown in McKenna's model (1995), appears to play a small role in negative trends in either recreational or academic reading attitude. This was also confirmed by Radebe (1995). Membership of smaller social units, for example, families, gangs, cliques and friendship may well exert stronger normative influences.

4.3.5 Reading instruction

The methods used in teaching reading may also influence reading attitude, and research has found that "opinions about the effects of methods and materials on attitude are frequently expressed but evidence is scant. Some studies have demonstrated positive effects attributable to specific techniques including metacognitive training, reading aloud to students using high quality literature" (Morrow, 1992:272). Studies reported by McKenna (1995) proves that no significant differences were observed between basal and whole language instruction on the reading attitudes of children from grade

1-5. McKenna (1995) also indicates that the instructional techniques that can at times influence attitudes is a potential source of variance in developmental studies that may account for some of the inconsistent findings of the past and argues for large-scale studies. McKenna (1995:954) says that to date effects on attitude have typically been measured with respect to teaching techniques designed to improve proficiency or facilitate content reading.

4.3.6 The mass media

According to Krashen (1993:78) media like radio, television, movies and tape recordings are readily available and they require less skill to absorb and thus take some of the time that otherwise might be devoted to reading. Krashen (1995) in his study also indicates that children seem to find more relaxation in spectator sports, in viewing the products of mass media or in engaging in do-it-yourself hobby projects. They do not regard reading as a means of pleasure or even as particularly necessary for acquiring information except for academic purposes. McKenna (1995) agrees with Krashen (1993) that mass media is a tool for the transmission of information and opinion, and that they have a strong influence on attitudes and behaviour. Watching television is good, but the young person who finds reading difficult may never make the effort required to become a skillful reader so long as comic books, pulp magazines and television are easily available. They both indicate that mass media takes some of the time that otherwise might be devoted to reading. Some children find reading less enticing than other things they may be doing. "It is widely assumed that watching television has a negative effect on reading and other aspects of language. Besides taking up time, another argument is that television programs do not provide the kind of input that would stimulate language development, and according to research done, this is true" (Krashen, 1993:78). Studies done by Caelers (1993), Fourie (1990), Krashen (1993) and McKenna (1995) reveal that children avoid reading

because they depend more on mass media for information, and this leads to no contact with books, except for taking a look at pictures or when they are compelled to do homework. There are no more library visits because children get glued to the television to the extent of watching almost all the programs.

4.3.7 The community

The community sometimes regard a child who reads a lot unfavourably. This negative attitude might be so outspoken that even the child does not want to see himself as a reader, to such an extent of even feeling guilty because he likes reading. Coetzee (1983:66) indicates that this negative social attitude often results in the rejection of reading as an activity. Reading is described as a solitary occupation. As a result of this, there is a suspicion that the reader does not take part in other activities because he is incapable of doing so. For this reason there is less resentment when invalids and handicapped persons spend their time reading. This association of reading with physical weakness probably prevents many people with a reading ability from reading. Coetzee (1983) draws our attention to the fact that sometimes children may seem to be reluctant readers when they do not take readily to the books we think they should be ready for, or the books we loved at their age. He points out that sometimes parents could be the cause, when they have pitched their expectations too high or have not related them to the child's capacity or interests, that is, not reading the books chosen for him.

4.3.8 Time available

Meek (1982) agrees with Frank (1960) that the school takes most of the child's time, because there is homework, after school activities, school projects to be done and travelling time between home and school. Children go to concerts, art classes, museums, music lessons, dancing, riding, skating

and swimming. They belong to recreational, cultural and religious groups, they go to community centres and as a result they do not find enough time for reading.

4.3.9 Experience

Meek (1982:194) states that some children become reluctant readers simply because their earliest encounters with books have not been favourable, so they put books aside as something not especially to be desired. According to Purves (1972:319) "reading is a personal experience and therefore the interaction of a human personality with the ideas on a printed page produces a result that is unique for him, personal in a very special sense." Meek (1982) reveals that a reader brings his own background of experience and understanding and as he reads, he interprets the text in the light of what he knows. In her studies she has proved that if the child's background is limited, especially with the culturally disadvantaged individual, and if he has gained little experience or information from a book which could make sense to him then his ability to interpret will be greatly hampered and in some cases almost be non-existent. This statement is supporting Pilgrim (1968) who indicates that when interaction on a meaningful level does take place between reader and the book, the reading produces new ideas and stimulates new images and responses which become an integral part of the individual's background. This is the essence of the learning process which makes reading satisfying.

4.3.10 Intellectual content

Pilgrim (1968) through his research has discovered that some children feel too challenged by the intellectual content of some books or at least by expectations concerning them. They are shy to reveal their unreadiness and take refuge in not liking to read. This usually happens especially in a family

where everybody reads and a youngster feels unable to compete with the reading standards of an older brother or sister. According to Kruger (1990:134) "children from the disadvantaged family backgrounds, where nobody can read and write, do not get the proper support for reading and learning." These children therefore tend to have negative attitudes towards reading.

4.3.11 Required reading

According to Frank (1960) children could be made reluctant readers by some of our educational routines. A child who is bored with his homework, much of which involves reading, is apt to lump all reading under the heading of boredom. He says that no list which requires all the children in a class to read the same book can possibly suit each individual child. One child finds the book too easy and not challenging enough. Another one finds it too hard, and the other does not have an interest at all.

4.3.12 Reading readiness

Chambers (1985) says that experience has revealed that not all children are ready to read at the same chronological age. To emphasize this he states that no one can make a child read until his mental, muscular and emotional co-ordination is developed or until his experiences have given him the background for understanding what is presented to him to read. As in other kinds of maturing, some children come to this stage of readiness more slowly than others. Then, too great demands for reading achievement before they are ready, may only confuse them or engender a stubborn refusal to learn to read.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion it could be stated that substantial research has been done to investigate reading attitude. The whole reading experience takes place within a particular cultural setting and this will affect reception and the attitudes towards reading.

In this chapter reading attitudes have been discussed, therefore it is the duty of educators to be knowledgeable about them, so as to apply appropriate methods of motivation if the right attitudes towards reading is to be created.



CHAPTER 5

MOTIVATION TO READ

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, the importance of literacy and the effects of illiteracy have been investigated. It has been discussed that language acquisition is attained through reading but children tend to have negative attitudes towards reading. It has also been pointed out that literacy attainment is enhanced by reading, which again enhances first and second language development. Since the benefits of reading have been proved conclusively, then the next step would be to ensure that all children read as much as possible. Underlying this effort is the problem of motivating children to read.

5.2 READING MOTIVATION

A number of researchers as revealed by Anderson, Scott and Wilkinson (1985) in Gambrell (1996) cautioned that in order for students to develop into mature, effective readers, they must possess both the skill and the will to read as well as balancing both affective and cognitive aspects of reading development. Reading motivation as defined by Garber (1983:107) "is a concept not a product, therefore it cannot be taught or given as an activity." Reading motivation is a feeling generated within the pupil, one that can be elicited and positively reinforced by teachers. It is a desire which needs to be met. Garber (1983) and Gambrell (1996) make us aware that the power to motivate lies in the ability to create an atmosphere in which children are freed to become inspired. A major goal for all teachers and teacher-librarians

should be to make students discover the personal inspirations that arouse the desire for reading. Guiding pupils in the process of making this discovery should be an essential aspiration for all educators.

5.2.1 Motivation in literacy development

It is generally acknowledged that motivation plays a critical role in learning, because it often makes the difference between learning that is superficial and shallow and learning that is deep and internalised. "Because of the powerful influence that motivation plays in literacy development, teachers are more interested in understanding the relationships that exist between motivation and achievement and in learning how to help all pupils achieve the goal of becoming effective, life long readers" (Gambrell, 1996:15).

Motivating students to read is one of the primary and overriding concerns, and creating an interest in reading is rated as the most important area for future research. Research shows that there is a link between motivation and achievement. Gambrell (1996) and Koskinen (1994) agree with each other that highly motivated readers are self-determining and generate their own reading opportunities. They want to read and choose to read for a wide range of personal reasons like curiosity, involvement, social interchange and emotional satisfaction. By so doing, they begin to determine their own destiny as literacy learners. Research supports the notion that literacy learning is influenced by a variety of motivation. Students who believe they are capable and competent readers are more likely to outperform those who do not hold such beliefs and students who perceive reading as valuable and important and who have personally relevant reasons for reading will engage in reading in a more planned and effortful manner; they become engaged readers. Gambrell (1996) describes an engaged reader as *motivated*, one who chooses to read for a variety of purposes like gaining new knowledge, escaping into the literacy world of the text and learning how to perform

task. An engaged reader is *knowledgeable* because he is able to use information gained from previous experiences to construct new understanding from text, to acquire knowledge from text, to apply knowledge gained from text reading in a variety of personal, intellectual and social contexts. He is *strategic* in the sense that he is able to employ cognitive strategies to decode, interpret, comprehend, monitor and regulate the reading process to satisfy goals and purposes of reading. Lastly, an engaged reader is socially interactive, able to share and communicate with others in the process of constructing and extending the meaning of text. That is the kind of reader educators must aim at when motivating.

5.3 FOSTERING READING MOTIVATION

It is important that teachers should create classroom cultures that foster reading motivation, and according to Gambrell (1996), Koskinen (1994) and Vanek (1995) teachers play a critical role in helping children develop into readers who read for both pleasure and information, therefore they should create classroom cultures that support and nurture children in becoming highly motivated readers. To accomplish this, the following should be observed:

5.3.1 An explicit reading model

One of the key factors in motivating students to read is a teacher who values reading and is enthusiastic about sharing a love of reading with students. "It is within the power of every teacher to inspire and motivate children to find a lifetime of pleasure and information in the reading of books" (Gambrell, 1996:20). Teachers, parents and librarians are motivating influences. They should be explicit reading models, that is, to love reading and to be avid readers themselves. Modelling could be done during sustained silent reading in classrooms, although this may be passive rather than explicit. Explicit

reading models occur when teachers share their own reading experiences with students and emphasise how reading enhances and enriches their lives. Koskinen (1994) and Vanek (1995) support the idea that there is usually something worth sharing in most of the books and materials we read, for example, an exciting or informative paragraph, a description of a character or an interesting turn of a phrase. When teachers share their own reading with students, they show how reading enhances their lives. They demonstrate to their students that reading helps them learn more about the world in which they live, it gives children pleasure and enjoyment, develops their vocabulary and helps them become better speakers and more effective writers. Gambrell (1996) emphasises the point that when teachers share appropriate selections from their personal reading, students begin to see teachers as real readers, and if teachers serve as explicit reading models for their students and associate reading with enjoyment, pleasure and learning, children will be encouraged to become voluntary life-long readers. Gambrell (1996:20) indicated that parents are also influences of motivation, because a child who grows up in an environment where reading is valued, benefits more than a child who comes from a background of illiterates. Statistics in South Africa according to Kruger (1990:135) show that there is vast illiteracy with more than five million illiterate adults. She states that these illiterate adults have children who go to school, children whose ability to benefit from formal education is severely hampered by their home backgrounds since they do not get proper support for learning.

5.3.2 A book-rich environment

Classroom libraries and personal libraries at home appear to be important influences on motivation to read. Studies by Allington and McGill-Franzen (1993), Gambrell (1993) and Morrow (1992) as quoted by Gambrell (1996) have provided support for the notion that when children have environments that are book-rich, the motivation to read is high. Opportunities for book

borrowing and avenues for obtaining books for home reading are significant factors in reading motivation. Increasing the number of books available to children in the classroom have a positive effect on the amount and quality of the literacy experiences in the classroom as well as the home environment. Book access as suggested by Koskinen (1994:177) is a significant factor in literacy development and that greater attention should be devoted to assuring that high quality classroom libraries are a priority in schools. For reading motivation to take place, children must have high quality books and other reading materials available to support them in becoming motivated, engaged readers. According to the READ educational trust (1995) the use of school and public libraries play a very important role in motivating children to read.

5.3.3 Opportunities for choice

Book choice is a very important factor in reading motivation, and its role in motivation in general is well recognised. According to Gambrell (1996:20) "The research related to self-selection of reading material supports the notion that the books and stories that children find most interesting are those they have selected for their own reasons and purposes." By so doing children expend more effort in learning and understanding the material. Opportunities for choice promote students' independence and versatility as readers. Research has proved that task engagement increases when students are provided with opportunities to make choices about their learning, because choice correlates with the development of intrinsic motivation.

5.3.4 Social interactions

Children interact with others about the books and stories they have read. Garber (1983:107) tells us that children choose a book because someone had told them about it, it could be a friend, teachers or parents. Book sharing, book clubs, discussion groups, teacher read-aloud sessions are all motivating

factors. The more books that children are exposed to, and know about, the more books they are likely to read. Social interactions with others encourage motivation, promote achievement, higher level cognition and intrinsic desire to read. The results of the 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress as quoted in Gambrell (1996:21) indicate that students who are engaged in frequent discussions about their reading with friends and family are more motivated and have higher reading achievement scores than those who did not have such interactions. Research has proved that social interactions with others about books and stories foster wide, frequent reading, and that opportunities for sharing and talking about books is an important factor in developing engaged, motivated readers and supports the contention that social interactions have a positive influence on reading achievement.

5.3.5 Familiarity with lots of books

Research findings have found that interest is a key factor in reading motivation as it fosters depth of processing information and enhances learning. Young children want to read and are curious about books that they are somewhat familiar with. They like to read books they know something about, for example, having heard from friends, read other books about the character, knowing the author or having read other books in the series.

According to Dewey (1995:365) this is curiosity in reading with which one is familiar and which is a driving force in motivation.

5.3.6 Reading-related incentives

Recent research that has been done by Cameron and Pierce (1994), as it appears in Gambrell (1996), shows clearly that rewards do not negatively impact upon intrinsic motivation with respect to attitude, time on task and

performance, but they really encourage and motivate children to read.

Research findings suggest that when a book is a reward for reading, children learn to value books and reading. "If teachers, librarians and parents are interested in developing an intrinsic desire to read, books are indeed the best rewards" (Gambrell, 1996:22). Vanek (1995) also points out that extrinsic rewards that are strongly related to reading and reading behaviour such as books, bookmarks, teacher praises can be used effectively to increase intrinsic motivation, particularly in children who do not have a literacy-rich background. Reading-related rewards increase children's motivation to read and the frequency of reading activities. To emphasise this point Gambrell (1996:23) says that the closer the reward to the desired behaviour (books to reading) the greater the likelihood that intrinsic motivation will increase. Rewards that are strongly linked to the desired behaviours may help to shape and direct the development of intrinsic motivation for example the READ organisation has various projects for reading motivation. Some of these are:

- The Festival of book competition where story telling, story reading and dramatisation of books is done.
- READ speech competition and here children prepare and deliver speeches on researched themes.
- The Kalula reading competition which is based on reading as many books as possible.
- Readathon where a certain period is just devoted to reading for pleasure.
- There are also debating festivals at high school and colleges.

"These events have resulted in an increase in the language competence of the participants and an improvement in the morale of teachers and pupils" (READ educational trust, 1995:5).

How are these books for rewards obtained? They could be collected at flea markets, garage sales, and library sales and given as presents to children on

their birthdays. By rewarding children with books it is an indication that books and reading are valued.

Researchers feel that teachers can make a real difference in the literacy lives of young children when they serve as reading models and motivators and create classroom cultures that are book-rich, provide opportunities for choice, encourage social interactions about books, build on the familiar books and reflect the view that books are the best rewards. By so doing they can be able to change pupils' attitudes towards reading, even those who do not want to read will hopefully gain an interest in reading. Once interest is gained, they become voluntary readers, and as they read on their own they acquire vocabulary which will lead to the development of their first and second languages. To be competent in reading motivation is always necessary, hence researchers like Garber (1983); Gambrell (1996) and the READ organisation (1995) recommend motivational programmes to be implemented to instil the desire to read.

5.3.7 Motivational programs

Motivational programs that are designed to support the literacy development provide first graders with high-quality children's literature and increase opportunities for reading both at school and at home. Such programs bring the school, home and community together, and they are designed to help children develop a love of reading.

According to research when designing a motivational program, a theme should be chosen and children are challenged to read or have someone read to them. Teachers support children in their efforts to meet the challenge of reading by creating classroom opportunities for reading and book sharing. Older children could read to young ones, guest readers read to individual students and small groups, parents and other family members are encouraged

to read to the first graders to assure that every child is successful. According to Gambrell (1996) and Garber (1983) children who participate in these programs become more motivated to read, spend more time reading independently, engage more frequently in discussions about books and stories with family and friends, take more books home to read and spend more time reading with family and friends. "Family literacy practices reveal that parents spend more time reading to their children, discuss books and stories more often, purchase more books for their children" (Gambrell, 1996:22). Children enjoy reading and spend more time reading independently. Research has found that a motivational reading program enhances the reading motivation and behaviour of children from low-literacy-achieving schools and increases both the quantity and quality of family literacy practices.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The implications of the above mentioned aspects are as follows:

- Pre-school children should be read to by parents or by their teachers. They should be introduced to books as early as possible. These could be wordless books or picture books.
- Classroom libraries should be book-rich because this is a significant factor in motivating children to read and greater attention should be devoted to book access within the classroom setting.
- When receiving books as gifts to be used as a motivation agent, this will mean that schools should explore avenues to promote book ownership particularly for those who may not receive books as gifts. "School-based programs that provide books as incentives or rewards may be needed in order to provide some children with the opportunity to acquire a home library" (Koskinen, 1994:177).
- About choosing their own books, research has proved that children are highly motivated to read books of their own choice. Self-selection of reading material is clearly linked to enjoyment and sustained reading

experiences.

- Prior experiences with a book has been proved to be more motivating in the sense that children frequently choose to read books that teachers and parents have read aloud to them. They normally choose books they have previously experienced through television, audio tapes, videos, filmstrips or the movies. According to Koskinen (1994) and Vanek (1995) exposing children to books through a variety of media encourages and motivates students to explore these books on their own.
- Children should be encouraged to read series books, because these books provide a unique opportunity for children to read about characters and settings they have experienced before, as the plots provide familiar as well as new and challenging information. Therefore teachers and parents should consider sharing a range of series books with children because of their motivational potential.
- When research was done on talking about books with others, children most often report that they read a book because their teacher told them about it or recommended it. They are also motivated to read books that parents and friends had told them about (social interaction).
- Children from deprived homes especially from the disadvantaged communities should be encouraged to become members of the public libraries. In rural areas where there are no public libraries, school libraries, classroom libraries and box libraries could be of great benefit.

The findings of this investigation, support the notion that teachers are in a position to make a positive impact on children's motivation to read, through careful planning with respect to the classroom literacy environment.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to gain insight into the state of research and consensus in the literature on language acquisition, reading attitudes, reading motivation and the importance of children's literature. The aim was to confirm what has often been written : children learn to read by reading.

The study has shown that a great deal of research around the world has been done, that is, in developed countries like Germany, Britain, Australia as well as in developing countries in Africa as well as in South Africa. The research covered all levels of education from pre-literacy to tertiary level in black and white communities.

6.1 LITERACY

With reference to the findings of the literature survey regarding literacy and the research projects carried out internationally and locally, "Literacy entails more than just decoding skills - it is a complex, constantly developing process that involves a wide range of skills, experience and understanding" (Olën & Machet, 1997:86). Many of the skills needed for successfully learning to read are taught through the process of a parent or caregiver, reading aloud to a child. The reality is that in South Africa caregivers in general were not supporting their children's acquisition of literacy. According to Kriegler ...[et al] (1993:72) even more distressing was the fact that they were also neglecting to teach youngsters the rich African cultural heritage of oral stories and songs. What has also been pointed out by most researchers is that *adult* education plays a most prominent role in promoting literacy and they

indicated that a child growing up in a literate family environment where reading, writing and the sharing of stories occur as part of the normal daily routine is at a distinct advantage when he starts school as compared to those pupils without reading preparation at home, since the latter will be lacking preliteracy skills. Unfortunately in South Africa according to Kruger (1990); Olën and Machet (1997) and Totemeyer (1994) there is vast illiteracy with more than five million illiterate adults. These illiterate adults have children who go to school, children whose ability to benefit from formal education is severely hampered by their home backgrounds, because they do not get proper support for learning. The learning implication is that South African children will enter primary school lacking preliteracy skills because they come from disadvantaged homes with no reading tradition.

Adult illiteracy needs to be eradicated in the first place, but South Africa needs a program like the America reads challenge. On the way to re-election, president Clinton announced this challenge. He is requesting legislation over the next five years to ensure that by the year 2000, all eight-year-olds in America will be able to read (Barber, 1997:42).

6.2 LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The general acceptance by researchers of the important role of reading in language development has been discussed in chapters two and three.

As most of the literature discussed is of overseas origin, one can rightly ask whether these concepts and opinions have also made their impact on South African educationalists.

In a first world context no-one would disagree with Huck, Hepler & Hickman (par. 2.2.1.1) that there is an important pre-literacy phase where children

should listen to stories and develop the desire to hear and learn new words. This is the phase when parents are expected to start reading stories to their children. The writer fully endorses the idea of Huck, Hepler & Hickman, but a pre-requisite is literate parents. In the South African context that might even be the exception and not the rule. In a thought provoking article, Kriegler ...[et al] (1993) discuss the situation in print bereft rural communities. They say that South African history has become a race between education and catastrophe. The research carried out in rural Venda focused on rural school-beginners' pre-literacy experience. The latter was found to be "distressingly inadequate" (Kriegler ...[et al], 1993:72).

The research also assessed the adequacy and appropriateness of formal literacy instruction in five rural Venda schools. They found that reading lessons were conducted without pupils being given the opportunity to read or handle books! There were seldom, if ever the opportunity to read continuous text. There were no books whatsoever in the classrooms (Kriegler ...[et al], 1993). So much then for literacy through literature!

Children need to be introduced to literacy in their mother tongue and the stories read should be contextually, linguistically and culturally appropriate (Kriegler ...[et al], 1993). This entails picture books published in the mother tongue. South Africa has 11 official languages, therefore the production of books is a daunting task, not only in the writing and translating of culturally appropriate stories, but particularly in the production of such books. Twenty percent surcharge can be added to the costs of all typesetting in an indigenous language (Swart, 1993:21).

The importance of picture books for language development was discussed in paragraph 2.2.2. In South Africa publishers are producing beautifully illustrated picture books relevant to South African children. These books are usually available in a number of indigenous languages. The most notable

example being the Little library project, winner of the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award.

The impact of comic book reading on language development and as a reading incentive was discussed in paragraph 2.2.3. Comics can act both as a bridge to full reading (especially in English as second language context) and as a valuable complementary activity. The acceptance of this fact lead to an interesting South African project.

In 1990 The Storyteller Group serialised a comic strip called 99 Sharp Street. It was a runaway success. Since 1990 was the International Year of Literacy, the group developed a 24-page colour comic strip story The river of our dreams. It was supported by an in-depth study on the use of such material in a classroom situation (Heale, 1985:8). Teachers see the use of such material as a bridge to full reading, especially in English as a second language context.

One can only hope that the education system in South Africa takes note of projects like the above and use the popularity of comic reading to make literacy both relevant and accessible.

6.3 READING ATTITUDES

In chapter four it has been discussed that often children do not perceive reading as a pleasurable activity. The reaction to The Storyteller Group's The river of our dreams proves that if books are accessible and acceptable they will be read. One teacher of a standard 7 class "feared lynching if I tried to stop them reading it" (Heale, 1993:8).

What the writer wishes for South African children are books in which they will not only learn about the seven wonders of the world, but also about

themselves and their lives. Stories that will confirm life as it is experienced in South Africa, with South African children who speak South African languages. This will certainly change their attitudes towards reading.

6.4 READING MOTIVATION

Different aspects of reading motivation were discussed in chapter five. The conclusion can be drawn that literacy engagement is the aim of education. Children should be able to read and more importantly want to read. Literacy cannot be acquired unless it is experienced. Children must have extensive opportunities to read, and these opportunities must be created by adults.

One of the most successful reading motivation programs in South Africa is the Readathon, organised annually by the Read Educational Trust (READ). It is a festival of books at the primary level and a public speaking and debating festival at the high school level. More and more rural schools are participating in these events. This has led in some areas of parents taking the initiative to intercede with the authorities for books for the schools as a result of seeing what can happen when pupils begin to read. When parents truly understand their role and their rights in their children's education, major changes will result (READ, 1995).

Because READ realises that the best way to motivate readers is through integrated instruction they have started a number of projects to educate teachers to use books in teaching. There is, for example, the College of Education Project. Since most student teachers come from the same under-resourced school backgrounds as their pupils, the student teachers, in many cases, have not had sufficient opportunity to practise their reading and language skills. These students learn about READ's methods and materials : READ believes that literacy can best develop when learners are motivated to read widely and to relate their reading to the world. READ believes that

the only means to this end is the provision of carefully selected books. The books must be introduced together with teacher training to enable them to utilise the material. These teachers will then be able to motivate their pupils to read widely. They will be able to introduce motivational programs like the mentioned Readathon as well as the other ideas discussed in chapter five.

6.5 SUMMARY

All reading activities depend on the availability of a variety of appropriate books for children. It is most important that children have access to books. How is this possible if many parents can barely afford to pay school fees or even to feed their children?

Children must have access to libraries : school libraries, and/or public libraries. Slashed state funding has made it virtually impossible to imagine that each South African school could have its own library. Bristow (1992) looked at the role of the library in a developing community and suggested that in view of limited resources, a strategy for the underdeveloped areas of South Africa might be to establish the combination of a community (public) and school library.

In conclusion it can be said that research confirms what has often been said, children learn to read by reading, that is, literacy through literature.

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