An Evaluation of Grades 10 and 11 English First Additional Language Learners' Interpretation of Verbal and Nonverbal Cues in Cartoons: A Case Study of the Sibasa Circuit, Limpopo Province

By

Anza Pearl Nelwamondo

Student number: 14007316

Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in English (Language Teaching)

In the

Department of English, Media Studies and Linguistics

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

University of Venda

SUPERVISOR: Dr. T.E. Sikitime

CO- SUPERVISOR: Dr. N.V. Demana

2025

© University of Venda

DECLARATION

I, Anza Pearl Nelwamondo, hereby declare that the dissertation for the Master of Arts in English Language Teaching, hereby submitted, has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other institution and that it is my own work in design and execution and that all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

17 February 2026

Signature

Date

© University of Venda

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the loving memory of my late grandmother, Mrs Munzhedzi Matodzi Mukhuvhukhuvhu, who was my pillar of strength and an enduring source of inspiration throughout my academic journey.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Mr. Rofhiwa Nelwamondo, for his unwavering support, valuable contribution, and motivation in the pursuit of my academic goals. Finally, I dedicate this study to my children Ramalamula Luna and Naledzi Masase Nelwamondo.

© University of Venda

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the successful completion of this research project.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to God for His mercy, grace, and blessings, which have equipped and sustained me to complete this work.

My supervisors, Dr. T.E Sikitime and Dr N.V. Demana, for their guidance and patience during the course of this study, their encouragement, interest, and enthusiasm are highly appreciated. They have demonstrated strong leadership through their dedication and motivation.

Professor Rudzani Muloiwa for giving me a chance in life and investing so much in me. He continues to motivate and encourage me to do better.

Mrs Kanakana Angelina Muloiwa for instilling discipline and cultivating me through the word of God and prayers.

My family and friends for their continuous support and words of encouragement.

Finally, I acknowledge the University of Venda's Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education for capacitating me to complete my studies and produce this work.

© University of Venda

ABSTRACT

English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners often struggle to interpret verbal and nonverbal cues in visual texts, affecting comprehension and engagement. This study aimed to evaluate the interpretative repertoire of Grade 10 and 11 learners regarding verbal and nonverbal cues in cartoons, focusing on selected English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners in the Sibasa Circuit, Limpopo Province. The study sought to answer the following question: How do EFAL learners interpret verbal and nonverbal cues in cartoons? The study adopted an exploratory design to generate insights and identify key variables, while the descriptive part provided a more detailed, structured analysis, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The population for the study comprised 18 grade 10 and 11 EFAL learners from purposively selected secondary schools within the Sibasa Circuit. The study adopted administered tests for data collection. Data was triangulated with thematic and relevance theory underpinning analytical perspectives. The findings of the study show that participants face various challenges that affect their ways of attaching meaning to visual texts (cartoons). The ability to make meaningful connections, plausible interpretations, and inferences seems to be limited. These include a limited ability to infer covert and implicit meanings. Furthermore, learners have difficulty engaging with visual literacy elements such as font, font size, and the meaning of body language and gestures in visual texts.

Keywords: Explicit meaning, Implicit meaning, Inference, Plausibility, Reading comprehension,

© University of Venda

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAPS Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement

DBE Department of Basic Education

EFAL English First Additional Language

ESL English Second Language

FP Foundation Phase

LOTL Language of Teaching and Learning

NCS National Curriculum Statement

UNESCO United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

© University of Venda

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Example of Implicature…….…….. P44

Figure 2: Grade 10 learners' interpretation of non-verbal cues (Term 2) … P75

Figure 3: Grade 10 learners' interpretation of non-verbal cues (Term 4) …. P79

Figure 4: Grade 11 learners' interpretation of non-verbal cues (Term 2) ……P83

© University of Venda

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Demographic details of Grade 10 Participants……. P67

Table 2: Demographic details of Grade 11 Participants……. P69

© University of Venda

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: University Clearance Certificate P117

APPENDIX B: 2024 Grade 10 Mid-year examination Cartoon text P118

APPENDIX C: 2024 Grade 10 End-year examination Cartoon text P120

APPENDIX D: 2024 Grade 11 Mid-year examination Cartoon text P122

APPENDIX E: 2024 Mid-Year examination Visual Text P124

APPENDIX F: Editing confirmation letter P125

APPENDIX G: Turnitin Report P126

© University of Venda

Contents

DECLARATION....2
DEDICATION....3
ABSTRACT....5
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS....6
LIST OF FIGURES....7
LIST OF TABLES....8
LIST OF APPENDICES....9
CHAPTER ONE....13
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY....13
1.1 Introduction....13
1.2 Background to the study....13
1.2.1 Problems with reading nonlinguistic modes....17
1.3 Statement of the problem....17
1.4 Aim of the study....18
1.5 Objectives of the study....18
1.6 Research questions....18
1.7 Assumption underpinning the study....18
1.8 Significance of the study....19
1.9 Definition of concepts....19
1.10 Delimitation of study....24
1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINE....24
CHAPTER 2....27
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK....27
2.1 Introduction....27
2.2 Traditional Conception Of Reading....27

© University of Venda

2.3 Strategic Reading And Cognitive Engagement 29
2.3.1 Genre Awareness and Textual Structure 29
2.3.2 Layers of Meaning in Textual Interpretation 30
2.4 Multimodal Literacies 31
2.5 The Role Of Cartoons As An Educational Tool In EFAL Classrooms 34
2.6 Reading Texts With Multiple Modes Of Representation 35
2.7 Limiting Extraneous Material In A Lesson 37
Theoretical Framework 39
2.8.1 Relevance Theory 39
2.8.2 Foundations of Relevance Theory: Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995) 40
2.8.3 Relationship between Relevance Theory (RT) and Discourse Analysis (DA) 40
2.8.4 Application to Pragmatics 41
2.8.5 Text comprehension 43
2.8.6 Inferential Processes 45
2.8.7 Inferential Communication: 45
2.8.8 Implicature: 45
2.8.9 Direct vs. Indirect Communication: 46
2.8.10 Context and Cognitive Environment 46
2.8.11 The Principle of Relevance 47
2.8.12 Inference in Communication 47
2.8.13 Explicit vs. Implicit Meaning 47
2.8.14 Code vs. Inference 48
2.9 Types of Inferences 48
2.9.3 Mutual Manifestness 49
2.9.4 Processing Models 49
2.9.5 Contextual Enrichment 49
2.10 Key Aspects of Contextual Enrichment: 50
2.11 Contextual Enrichment and Relevance 51
2.12 Cognitive Economy 52
2.13 Cognitive Principle of Relevance 53
2.14 Conclusion 53

© University of Venda

CHAPTER 3: 54
3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 54
3.1. Introduction 54
3.2. Research Design 54
3.3. Research Approach 56
3.4. Application 58
3.5. Research Paradigm 58
3.6. Population 60
3.7. Sample Size 61
3.8. Data Collection 63
3.9. Data Analysis 64
3.10. Ethical Considerations 65
3.11. Summary 66
CHAPTER 4: 67
4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS 67
4.1. Introduction 67
4.2. Demographic Details Of The Participants 68
4.3. Data Presentation 70
4.4. Term 4 Grade 10 Learners' Performance ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.5. Grade 11 June Assessment ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.6. Grade 11 November Assessment ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER 5 85
5. Interpretation and discussion of findings 85
5.1. Introduction 85
5.2. DATA ANALYSIS 85
5.3. Discussions Of Findings 85
CHAPTER 6 94
6. SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 94
6.1. Introduction 94
6.2. The Summary 94
6.3. Recommendations 96
References 99

© University of Venda

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study's background, introducing reading as a multifaceted process that involves viewing, processing, and encoding information into meaningful data. The study's aim, objectives, research questions, and problem statement are introduced, followed by an explanation of its significance and definitions of key concepts.

1.2 Background to the study

Cartoons are a powerful multimodal tool that combines verbal (text-based) and nonverbal (visual) elements to convey messages, often using humour, satire, symbolism, and exaggeration. In English First Additional Language (EFAL) classrooms in South Africa, cartoons can play a crucial role in language development, comprehension, and the acquisition of critical literacy skills. Reading competency is one of the fundamental skills that students at all levels and across all domains need to function effectively in the contemporary world. On the other hand, reading for comprehension is a process that involves a simultaneous extraction and construction of meaning through interaction with both verbal and visual texts. It is assumed that active, intentional thinking involves interaction between the text and the reader (Guo et al., 2020; Hennessey, 2021).

One cannot deny that language is an integral part of human life and society, as it is used in communication to express arguments and opinions to one another (Pertama, 2020). It is an integral part of education (Pertama, 2020), societal traditions, and culture, instrumental in spreading content and information to a global audience. Therefore, language dominates most transactions, with social, cultural, and cognitive implications (Jumaiti, 2014).

© University of Venda

With rapid changes in the public communicative domain, the need to review the requisite reading competencies and associated pedagogical practices is increasingly receiving scholarly attention (Castillo-Martínez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2021). Traditionally, reading competencies have focused primarily on the ability to read print-based texts, with alphabetic letters predominating in textual compositions. However, technological advances have also widened affordances, introducing a diverse range of texts that were previously unimaginable. Texts with multiple semiotic modes, including, among others, infographic texts, hypertext, and hypermedia, are widely used across discourse. These developments contribute to the ongoing debate, which, in essence, seeks to understand what it means to be literate in the digital age and what pedagogical interventions would be required to address this change.

For instance, cartoons are used for various purposes across domains. A significant shift is occurring in how these multimodal texts are used and perceived. (Pedrazzini and Scheuer, 2019.) Noted that cartoons were mainly seen as passive entertainment, especially for children. With improved affordances of digital technologies, cartoons, like any other type of multimodal text, are part of interactive media, which is used in apps, games, and educational platforms where viewers engage with content actively (Won, 2023).

Social and Political Economics is increasingly adopting cartoons to raise awareness for a noble cause, with some used to challenge, mock, or critique decisions of social and cultural significance (Trotry & Medzini, 2013). Although the use of cartoons in public discourse is not a new practice, their dominance in contemporary communicative spaces is further propelled by the widening access to the Internet and digital media (Abraha, Basheer, Sudhakaran & Babu, 2021)

Often inherently intertwined with the context, text designers use their artistic techniques to combine textual features with a range of semiotic designs (visual, gestural, and spatial) to convey a given central message. The meaning embedded could be overt or subtle. While readers with multiliteracy competencies often thrive, this may not be the case for novice readers (Anstey & Bull, 2018).

© University of Venda

In response to the diverse texts available in the public domain, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) has introduced non-linguistic texts, such as advertisements, infographic texts, and cartoons, into the curriculum. The assessment rubrics that the department has developed require learners at the secondary level to be able to analyse and interpret visual texts with various stipulated levels of competency (Department of Basic Education, 2011:18). At the senior phase, which encompasses grade 12, the reading and interpretive skills that learners are expected to display include, among others: making informed observations, making reflections, analyzing, and applying a range of critical thinking skills, of which ability to make plausible inferences one of the central requisite competencies (Department of Basic Education, 2011:18).

Being one of the central elements applied when decoding cartoons, making inferences entails making a logical guess or “reading between the lines. It is like a chemical reaction, where two elements combine to form a new substance. Readers make inferences when they can use or incorporate their own experiences and combine them with the information they gather from what they read. The result is that they create new meanings or draw a conclusion that is not explicitly stated in the reading (Zweirs, 2005).

The role of readers' experiences in decoding text in its context is a contentious issue in academic discourse. Some argue that if readers rely solely on their own background knowledge to make sense of a text, their comprehension of the subject is likely to be limited. On the other hand, relying solely on the text's context does not validate their personal point of view; instead, no connection would be made, and only literal comprehension would result. Conversely, when readers infer, they must be personally engaged with the text to decode both implicit and explicit meaning, particularly the author’s intentions, orientation, and background reading (Zweirs, 2005; Kiili et al., 2024).

A text generally provides multiple possible interpretations, which can be considered correct or incorrect depending on their relevance, content, and context (Zweirs, 2005; Kiili et al., 2024). Generally, a teacher has an implicit opinion about how the text should be understood by learners, i.e., what inferences should be made, what is vital to the reading itself, and what the text's aim is. However, the aim is not always made clear. This means that the teacher also has an idea about what will be used as premises in the text. The

© University of Venda

interpretation of the text may differ from the inferences learners draw from the visuals. This makes studies of this nature interesting, as they allow for broad views of the inferences people make and the factors that contribute to them.

From the explanation above, one can, therefore, conclude that the inference strategy is one of the critical reading strategies in which the readers would need to access knowledge and facts from the text, mainly from earlier experiences or their prior knowledge as a base or premise for making a logical conclusion (Jumaiti, 2014).

The decision to incorporate a multiliteracy component in the teaching of EFAL is in response to developmental imperatives in the communicative domain. The plurality of texts that come with a peculiar semiotic orientation may suggest potential textual shifts with implications, particularly for students and language practitioners alike. Maeda (2006) and Coleman & Dantzler (2010) argued that teachers in the contemporary era are not adequately trained to respond to the requisite literacies that are associated with semiotic hybridity and complex data. Compounding the emerging dilemma, the literacy field continues to overemphasize the verbal (relative to visual) aspects of texts, a phenomenon documented by Winn 30 years ago as verbal bias (Ceja & Xiong, 2021). The unfortunate by-product of this bias is that learners will under develop the mental structures that are endemic to visual processing. Furthermore, verbal bias often relegates graphical representations to a secondary role in learning from texts (Schnotz et al., 1993; Guo, Zhang, Wright, & McTigue, 2020).

There is, therefore, a need to acknowledge and interrogate the current trends in communication and establish whether various modes of representation pervasive in the public domain may have a bearing on reading, writing, and comprehension, or replace language as a core unit of communication. For example, emojis are gradually replacing words in text messages, necessitating a better understanding of how non-linguistic content and information can be decoded, interpreted, and understood (Kress, 2003).

Research on the effect of graphics on reading comprehension has shown problematic discrepancies. While readers generally benefit from having both verbal and visual sources of information, research demonstrates certain situations in which graphics have no, or

© University of Venda

even negative, effects on learners' comprehension (Hayes & Reinking, 1991; McTigue, 2009). Ardasheva et al., 2018).

1.2.1 Problems with reading nonlinguistic modes

The dominance of Nonlinguistic modes varies across domains. These modes can either be iconic, indexical, or symbolic. The requisite interpretative repertoire associated with each of these signs is not only unique but also context reliant. For instance, iconic signs often physically resemble or imitate what they represent. As a result, their meaning is derived from their visual similarity to real-world objects or concepts (Zlatev &Möttönen, 2022). Although iconic signs show visual similarity to what they represent, the reader's experiences may influence how they process a given text in its context. Unlike iconic signs, indexical signs often convey meaning through a direct connection or evidence of the thing they represent, whereas symbolic signs convey meaning through cultural or learned associations (Zlatev & Möttönen, 2022)**.** The uniqueness of these signs in terms of their structural composition underscores the need to interpret them in line with discipline- and genre-specific conventions. While studies on what it means to be literate in the 21st century abound, the contextual realities that may inform divergent views on what constitutes critical literacies still require further investigation.

This study, therefore, seeks to understand the contextual realities and experiences that will inform readers from previously disadvantaged communities' interpretations of contexts with multiple semiotic modes.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Despite the increasing use of multimodal texts, such as cartoons, in educational settings, many learners struggle to accurately interpret the verbal and nonverbal cues embedded in them. This presents a challenge, particularly for English First Additional Language learners, who may lack the necessary interpretative skills to decode both linguistic and non-linguistic signs effectively. The difficulty in making plausible inferences from these cues can hinder their overall comprehension and academic performance. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the interpretative repertoire of selected learners in decoding

© University of Venda

cartoons, focusing on the challenges they encounter and the inferences they draw when interpreting these multimodal texts. By addressing these interpretative challenges, the study aims to improve understanding of learners' decoding abilities, ultimately enhancing instructional practices and assessment strategies.

1.4 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to evaluate the plausibility of inferences learners make when decoding linguistic and non-linguistic signs used in cartoons on selected formative assessment tasks.

1.5 Objectives of the study

1. To evaluate learners' interpretation of verbal and non-verbal cues on selected cartoons.
2. To determine the plausibility of inferences learners make when decoding cartoons on selected formative assessment tasks.
3. To determine learners' challenges when decoding cartoons on selected formative assessment tasks.

1.6 Research questions

1. To what extent are learners able to make sense of cartoons' verbal and non-verbal cues on selected formative assessments?
2. How plausible are the inferences learners make when interpreting cartoons?
3. What challenges do learners encounter when interpreting cartoons on selected formative assessment tasks?

1.7 Assumption underpinning the study

Learners are likely to make implausible inferences when decoding and answering cartoon questions. This could stem from learners' difficulties in using their knowledge as a basis for the requisite logical conclusions.

© University of Venda

1.8 Significance of the study

This study may provide insight into the development of reading instruction and materials that will eventually help EFL teachers improve their pedagogical practices, with greater emphasis on illustrated reading materials.

Teaching how to use background knowledge in the context of gap-filling inference could improve general reading comprehension. Moreover, the study is expected to make a beneficial contribution to the field of teaching and learning English, benefiting not only teachers but also academic practitioners, students, and other researchers in institutions of higher learning.

Teachers may receive important information to enhance their teaching skills, allowing them to develop effective teaching methods that benefit learners' comprehension of reading texts.

Through this study, teachers may improve their teaching quality to improve learners' reading comprehension. The findings in this study may contribute to future research on reading comprehension within Multiliteracies.

1.9 Definition of concepts

1.9.1 Cartoons

According to Arko and Asif (2012), the term "cartoon" has been used since the 19th century to describe humorous drawings in magazines and newspapers, as well as on walls or glass. However, cartoonists have recently created imaginative paintings of cartoons to convey humour, satire, or caricature. Cartoons began to be used to describe television shows, comic strips, and animated films at the turn of the 20th century. Cartoons can be interpreted in a variety of ways because they use drawings, symbols, or representations to allude to witty, humorous, satirical, or other situations.

© University of Venda

1.9.2 Implicit meaning

Perfetti and Stafura (2015:1) define the implicit meaning of a text as the information that is not directly stated but can be inferred by the reader based on the text's language, structure, and context. It involves meanings that are “closely bound to the language of the text, the meanings of words, and the grammar of the language,” and are constructed by the reader through interpretation rather than explicit expression

1.9.3 Inference

Inference is the cognitive process of drawing conclusions based on evidence and reasoning rather than from explicit statements. Reading and comprehension involve integrating textual information with prior knowledge to derive meanings that are not directly stated (Cain & Oakhill, 2021).

This definition rests on the basic distinction that there is an encoded meaning for linguistic signs from which inferences may arrive at further meaning." It also explains the process of drawing conclusions or making judgments based on evidence, reasoning, or prior knowledge. It can be applied in various contexts, such as logic, science, and language comprehension. Here are some key contexts where "inference" is used:

a) Logical Inference: In logic and mathematics, inference is the act of deriving new information or conclusions from known facts or premises.
b) Language and Communication: Inferences in language occur when a listener or reader derives meaning from what is implied but not directly stated. For example, if someone says, "It’s really cold in here," the inference might be that they want the window closed, or the heater turned on.
c) Statistical Inference: In statistics, inference refers to the process of drawing conclusions from data that is subject to random variation. This can involve estimating population parameters or testing hypotheses based on sample data.
d) Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence: In the context of AI and machine learning, inference refers to the process of making predictions or decisions based

© University of Venda

on a trained model. For instance, after training a neural network, inference is used to classify new data points based on the patterns learned during training.

In all cases, inference involves using available information to come to conclusions that extend beyond the immediately available data.

1.9.4 Explicit meaning

Explicit meaning is the same as literal meaning, which is seen as the first but not the only piece of evidence available to the hearer of the speaker's meaning... meaning understanding is an integrative, sequential, and graded process that always sets out from a salient piece of evidence" (Abuarrah, 2018:2)

1.9.5 Multiliteracies

Multiliteracy refers to the ability to interpret and communicate ideas using various text formats, symbols, and multimodal resources. According to Abidin (2015), multiliteracy involves engaging with diverse forms of texts to effectively convey and interpret meaning in different contexts. Sujiati, Jaya, and Rosmiyati (2024) further define multiliteracy as the use of multiple strategies by students to enhance their knowledge and proficiency in a particular subject area.

Multiliteracy learning is characterised by its student-centred approach, employing a variety of instructional models and strategies to foster active engagement. It encourages learners to ask questions, draw conclusions, and think critically. As noted by Prawiro (2018), this approach aims to develop students' self-confidence, intelligence, communication skills, courage, and character.

Rahmanita (2019) notes that the multiliteracy learning model combines student-centered pedagogy with the development of scientific thinking skills. A key feature of this model is its emphasis on problem-posing, encouraging students to formulate questions and explore solutions.

In the context of English language learning, multiliteracy is crucial for equipping students to communicate effectively in global contexts. However, despite pedagogical shifts toward

© University of Venda

more interactive and multimodal approaches, Jaya (2017) notes that students' English-speaking proficiency in Indonesia has not shown significant improvement.

1.9.6 Interpretative repertoires

Interpretative repertoires are defined as relatively consistent and bounded units of language that individuals draw upon to construct versions of actions, events, or phenomena in discourse. Developed by social psychologists Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, the concept is central to certain forms of discourse analysis, particularly those grounded in a constructionist perspective. These repertoires are composed of recurring terms, metaphors, and stylistic patterns that speakers use to make their accounts appear factual or persuasive (Wetherell & Potter, 1988)

1.9.7 Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is one of the most important skills learners need for academic achievement (Pardo 2004), as it enables them to construct meaning from different texts. However, many South African learners lack the ability to read for comprehension. Although fairly dated, this claim is supported by Pretorius and Lephalala (2011), who stated that comprehension skills need urgent attention. More than 100 million young people globally still cannot read (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2017).

Reading and comprehension are vital skills that must be taught explicitly in the Foundation Phase (FP), as they will be used throughout learners' schooling and professional careers. Spaull (2015) stated that in the FP, the focus is on 'learning to read,' while in the Intermediate Phase, there is a shift to 'reading to learn.'

1.9.8 Multimodal texts

Multimodal texts are texts that combine two or more modes of communication, such as linguistic, visual, aural, gestural, and spatial elements, to convey meaning. These texts go beyond traditional written formats by integrating diverse semiotic resources, enabling richer, more dynamic communication. According to Kessler (2022), multimodal texts use different communicative modes to enhance meaning-making, particularly in educational

© University of Venda

and digital contexts. This includes materials such as infographics, videos, podcasts, and interactive presentations, which require readers or viewers to interpret meaning across multiple channels simultaneously.

1.9.9 Semiotic designs

Semiotic design refers to the intentional use of signs, symbols, and multimodal elements to create learning environments, messages, or materials that enhance meaning-making. It is grounded in the theory of **semiosis**, a triadic process involving the sign, the signifier, and the signified, through which learners interpret meaning based on their cultural background, experiences, and context. According to Ley and Gannon-Cook (2023), semiotic design in instructional settings aims to align educational content with learners' socio-cultural frameworks, thereby increasing engagement, comprehension, and relevance. This approach emphasizes that meaning is not fixed in the content itself but is co-constructed by the learner through interaction with culturally resonant signs and symbols.

1.9.10 Symbolism

Symbolism is a literary device in which characters, objects, actions, or ideas are used to represent meanings beyond their literal sense. It allows writers to convey abstract concepts, emotions, or themes indirectly, adding depth and complexity to a narrative. As Tonglet, Thiem, and Gurevych (2025) explain, symbolism enables authors to communicate complex ideas through metaphorical representations, encouraging readers to interpret deeper meanings within a story. For instance, a dove may symbolize peace, while a shattered object might represent the collapse of order or innocence.

1.9.11 Summative assessments

Summative assessment is a formal method used to evaluate students' learning at the end of an instructional unit, course, or academic period. It is designed to measure the extent to which students have achieved the intended learning outcomes and curriculum standards. Unlike formative assessment, which supports learning during the process, summative assessment focuses on evaluating learning after instruction has been completed (Brookhart, 2004; Dolin et al., 2017).

© University of Venda

1.9.12 Verbal cues

Verbal cues refer to the spoken or written elements of communication, including the choice of words, tone, and language structure used to convey meaning. These cues are essential for delivering explicit content and are often supported by **nonverbal cues such as** facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye contact, and tone of voice (Abi-Esber, 2023).

1.9.13 Non-verbal cues play a critical role in shaping how verbal messages are interpreted. They can reinforce, contradict, or substitute verbal communication, and are especially influential in interpersonal and group interactions. As Abi-Esber (2023) notes, the interplay between verbal and non-verbal cues significantly affects how individuals perceive one another and decide whether to engage in conversation

1.10 Delimitation of the study

This study is delimited to Grades 10 & 11 learners in two (2) secondary schools located within the Sibasa Circuit of the Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province. While the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) prescribes a wide range of visual texts, including advertisements, tables, charts, and graphs, this study focuses exclusively on cartoons. The choice to focus on cartoons is guided by their importance and significance in the curriculum and their relevance in assessing learners' literacy skills

1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This study is divided into six chapters as outlined below:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background of the Study

Chapter 1 introduced the research study whereby challenges, particularly for English First Additional Language learners, who may lack the necessary interpretative skills to decode both linguistic and non-linguistic signs effectively were observed. The difficulty in making plausible inferences from these cues can therefore hinder learners' overall comprehension and academic performance.

© University of Venda

This chapter defined the research problem, outlined the aim, objectives, and research questions, and delimited the study's scope and limitations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The chapter presented an extensive review of relevant literature and theories related to the study. It presented a comprehensive review of existing relevant literature from other scholars, researchers, and books across years and decades to validate the plausibility of the research topic.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter 3 outlined the research design and methodology employed in this study. It highlighted how the study used both descriptive and exploratory research designs to enable the researcher to collect data and immerse themselves in it to describe, gain insights, and analyse the data thoroughly. The chapter detailed the sampling strategy, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. The chapter outlined how purposive sampling was employed to cover a wide range of learners' performance levels: below average, average, and above average. An account of the ethical considerations was provided, including the permission granted to conduct the investigation.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents the data and analyses the data collected for this study. This chapter presents the investigation's results, providing a detailed analysis and interpretation of the data. It provides a detailed presentation of qualitative data to answer the research questions.

Chapter 5: Interpretation and discussion of findings

The researcher became immersed in the data collected for familiarization, employing thematic data analysis procedures. Since Chapter 4 presented the results and detailed the findings, the researcher identified themes related to the study objectives using thematic data analysis. The results were then presented in a clear and organised manner using themes, numbers, and graphs where necessary.

© University of Venda

Chapter 6: Overview of the study findings, conclusions, and recommendations

This chapter provides an overview of the study's findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

© University of Venda

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature to identify existing knowledge gaps and highlight the need for the current study. The study's aim and objectives guided the literature review, and special focus was placed on the interpretative repertoire and the associated challenges in the reading and decoding semiotic modes on cartoons.

2.2 Traditional Conception of Reading

The teaching of reading has traditionally been monomodal text-based practice (Mohlabi-Tlaka et al., 2017). Local strategies for drawing text-based inferences help readers determine the meanings of unfamiliar lexical items and clarify syntactic ambiguity, typically within a sentence boundary. Helpful strategies, such as relying on contextual clues, conducting word analyses, or consulting dictionaries, are fundamental skills for understanding vocabulary meaning. Resolving syntactic ambiguity resulting from cohesive ties, such as pronoun references and ellipses, is limited within the boundaries of a single sentence or paragraph. When dealing with a challenging text, such as a research article under investigation or analysing cartoons for learners, local reading strategies are somewhat limited in their usefulness. The reader needs to rely more on pre-planning and monitoring strategies.

To what extent does cognitive psychology illuminate the dynamic interplay between reader and writer in the act of meaning-making? Gooda (2022) suggests that reading is not a passive reception of information but a transactional process wherein the reader actively reconstructs meaning through engagement with the text. Building on this, how might schema theory further explain the reader's role in bridging textual gaps using prior knowledge? Zhang (2025) argues that comprehension is deeply rooted in the activation of existing cognitive frameworks, which enable readers to elaborate and interpret meaning beyond the surface level. Moreover, if strategic reading requires more than mere

© University of Venda

decoding, what constitutes a truly strategic reader? To answer this, Almasi and Fullerton (2012) propose that effective reading involves “a capable agent, an attainable goal, and an allowable action,” yet they also emphasize the necessity of conditional knowledge, that is, knowing when and why to deploy specific strategies, alongside declarative and procedural knowledge. These perspectives raise important questions about how educators can cultivate such multifaceted literacy skills in diverse learning contexts

Furthermore, in her book Reader, Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World (2018), Wolf encourages learners to become strategic readers when approaching academic prose in two ways. The first is adopting the SQ3R reading technique (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review). This strategy emphasises the importance of reader engagement with the text as an integral component of the reading process. The objectives are twofold: to activate relevant prior knowledge and promote text interpretation and retention.

What does it truly mean to read strategically, and how might a structured approach enhance comprehension across academic contexts? The recommendation of a three-phase strategy that is before reading, while reading, and after reading raises important questions about the reader’s role in actively constructing meaning rather than passively consuming information. How do these phases interact with cognitive processes during reading, and what implications do they hold for instructional design?

Building on this, Al Khalifa’s (2024) endorsement of an information processing model invites further inquiry: can the cognitive analytic approach, which involves observing skilled readers at moments of textual difficulty, offer a reliable framework for diagnosing and supporting comprehension breakdowns? If so, how might educators translate these observations into effective pedagogical interventions?

Meanwhile, Hyland’s (2005) assertion that research articles across disciplines exhibit a recognizable linguistic structure prompts interrogation into genre conventions: to what extent do these textual features reflect the communicative goals and epistemological values of their respective fields? And how might an awareness of such rhetorical patterns empower readers to navigate disciplinary boundaries more effectively?

© University of Venda

Therefore, the reader can apply strategies to exploit the conventional rules of the research article genre. He cited Swales' analysis of a typical article introduction as consisting of a four-move structure: establishing the research field, summarising previous research, preparing for the present research, and introducing the present research.

2.3 Strategic Reading and Cognitive Engagement

Strategic reading has evolved from a passive decoding process to an active, goal-oriented engagement with text. Gooda (2022) emphasizes that reading is a transactional process in which the reader reconstructs meaning through interaction with the writer's ideas. This view aligns with schema theory, which posits that readers draw upon prior knowledge to fill gaps and elaborate meaning (Zhang, 2025). Al Khalifa (2024) extends this cognitive perspective by advocating an information processing model, suggesting that skilled readers navigate problematic junctures through analytic strategies that reflect deeper cognitive engagement.

Almasi and Fullerton (2012) further refine the concept of strategic reading by identifying three essential components: a capable agent, an attainable goal, and an allowable action. They argue that effective readers must possess conditional knowledge—knowing when and why to apply specific strategies—in addition to declarative and procedural knowledge. This triadic framework underscores the importance of metacognition and adaptability in reading instruction.

2.3.1 Genre Awareness and Textual Structure

Parallel to cognitive models, genre-based approaches offer insights into the structural and rhetorical conventions of academic texts. Hyland (2005) maintains that research articles across disciplines exhibit recognizable linguistic patterns that reflect their communicative purpose and disciplinary norms. This perspective builds on Bhatia's (1993, 2016) foundational work, which argues that genre conventions are not merely stylistic but serve functional roles in knowledge dissemination.

Kanoksilapatham (2009), applying Swales' (1990, 2004) move structure theory, observes that scientific research article abstracts follow identifiable rhetorical patterns, though with disciplinary variations. Her findings suggest that genre awareness is crucial for both

© University of Venda

reading and writing academic texts, as it enables learners to anticipate textual organization and interpret authorial intent more effectively.

2.3.2 Layers of Meaning in Textual Interpretation

Nuttall (2005) introduces a layered model of conceptual, propositional, contextual, and pragmatic, which enriches our understanding of how readers process texts. Each word carries a conceptual meaning, while sentences convey propositional meaning that can be verified. Contextual meaning adds functional value, and pragmatic meaning reflects the writer's attitude and intended effect on the reader. This model highlights the complexity of textual interpretation and the interplay between linguistic form, context, and interpersonal dynamics.

When studying prevalent organisational patterns as manifested in scientific research article abstracts, applying the work of Swales (2004, 1990), Kanoksilapatham (2009), observed that the use of such moves could be recognized with some variations. Nuttall (2005), on the other hand, differentiates four types of meaning when a text is processed by showing that each word carries its own conceptual meaning, i.e., representing a certain concept or idea. When words are put together to form a sentence, the sentence manifests its propositional meaning. It conveys a statement's plain sense or signification, which can be verified. Therefore, the other two meanings, contextual and pragmatic, are added to the propositional meaning. When a proposition is considered in a context, it carries its contextual meaning that provides a statement's force or functional value. When a statement is meant to convey the writer's attitudes, the intended effect on the reader is known as the pragmatic meaning, suggesting the writer-reader interaction.

Nuttall further stresses the importance of making a clear distinction between the propositional meaning (signification) and the contextual meaning (value). To fully understand a text, the reader must be able to interpret the value of the proposition and the logical flow of this value, not simply understand its signification. Latipova (2023) makes this distinction by using "cohesion" and "coherence" to refer to text unity in terms of signification and value. Tierney and Pearson (2024) review the research on reading instruction and conclude that comprehension can be taught. Many successful strategies include using background knowledge to make inferences or set purposes, identifying the

© University of Venda

main idea, determining the sources of information needed to answer a question, and applying the typical structure of stories or expository texts to help students understand what they are reading (CCSENET, 2013).

2.4 Multimodal Literacies

Multimodal approaches to second-language learning can enhance language proficiency by providing Foreign-Language Learners with greater exposure to the target language's culture, enabling multiple-literacy competencies in the target language, and appealing to students' learning preferences (Mohammed-Ahmed, 2021).

The multimodal theory in education was developed from the work of Hodge and Kress (1988) in social semiotics, involving multimodal perspectives on meaning-making. The theory emphasizes the communication of meaning and posits that meaning-making choices involve interaction with language and a wide range of semiotic resources people use to communicate; therefore, semiotic modes of meaning are essential resources for designing learning and instruction (Bezemer & Kress, 2015; Kress, 1988).

According to the multimodal principle (Collins, 2011; DeWitt, Selfe, & Takayoshi, 2004; Kress, 2010), printed texts are one mode of communication, and meaning can be communicated or constructed from different modalities, including visual illustrations and physical kinesthetic modes. Kress (1998) argues that the focus on language as a single mode of communication neglects other representational and communicational semiotic modes that offer different potentials for human expressions.

The central assumption of semiotic theory is that individuals choose the mode that best communicates their ideas (Ajayi, 2009), which may be a language, a sign, a symbol, or a visual illustration. For example, referees in sports use whistles, hand signals, and yellow and red cards to convey their meaning. Additionally, traffic signs and signals are universally accepted modes of communication, and driving literacy requires the ability to interpret these signs, as well as knowledge of written rules. Gee (1989a) also contributed to the social-semiotic theory of communication, introducing the concept of discourse acquisition. According to Gee (as cited in DeWitt, Selfe, & Takayoshi, 2004), semiotic

© University of Venda

domains and signs are core to learning experiences, and learning requires the mastery of these domains and the ability to participate with the groups that use them.

Kress's (1988, 1998, 2010, 2011) work on genre and modes of communication has shifted the focus of literacy from language as the sole means of communication (mono-mode) to a variety of semiotic modes, including sounds and images. According to Bowen and Whithaus (2013), the genre encompasses a range of communication media, including film, video, games, speeches, photographs, visual graphics, and written and spoken words.

Additionally, the New London Group (1996) proposed an intertextual perspective, emphasizing five modes of meaning (linguistic, audio, visual, gestural, and spatial) that can be recombined within a text. Songs and movies are examples of an intertextual design that includes "(a) linguistic elements in vocabulary, metaphor, and information structure, (b) audio meaning in music and sound effects, (c) visual meaning in backgrounding and foregrounding effects, (d) spatial meaning in geographic, exosystemic, and architectonic design, and (e) gestural meaning in body language, feeling, and behavior" (London Group, 1996, pp.23-24). However, the current multimedia learning model (Mayer, 2014) redefines modes of meaning as a verbal and visual format, that is, words and pictures. Pictures include "static graphics" such as photos, drawings, maps, charts, figures, and tables, or "dynamic graphics" such as video or animation (Mayer, 2002:2).

Multimodal pedagogies utilize various printed and digital resources, integrating verbal and visual modes to enable the construction of meaning across different modalities (Arnott, Palaiologou, Gray, & Yelland, 2018; New London Group, 1996). The term multimodality refers to the representation of meaning across different textual and digital modes, whereas multiliteracy skills indicate the ability to function in the target discourse using various modes of meaning-making (UWEC Center for Writing Excellence, 2015). However, the literature often uses "multimodality" and "multiliteracy" interchangeably or together to refer to the same concept (Yi & Angay-Crowder, 2016). The multimodal theory of meaning-making informs several multitenancy pedagogies (e.g., Collins, 2011; Duke,

© University of Venda

Purcell-Gates, Hall, & Tower, 2006; New London Group, 1996), which can be adapted for use in foreign-language instruction.

The New London Group (1996), for instance, introduced a multiliteracy learning design that considers all available resources for designing, reproducing, and transforming meaning. The New London group (1996, p. 29) developed a four-stage pedagogical model of instruction that includes (a) a situated practice in which instruction utilises available discourses and resources in workplaces and public spaces to immerses students in the learning experience; (b) overt instruction that presents metalanguages using different modes of representation; (c) critical framing that allows learners to relate and interpret meaning to its social and cultural context; and (d) practice by which students transfer meaning and apply it to other cultural and social contexts

Literacy is the foundation for learning other things throughout one's life. Literacy plays a crucial role in human life, contributing to individual welfare and social well-being (Fransman, 2005; Whitehead, 2010). Initially, literacy is meant to be literacy, but the meaning is incorrect. The literal and technical meaning of "literacy" refers only to reading and writing. Therefore, literacy is more accurately interpreted as literacy (Fletcher & Bullock, 2012). Literacy implies the ability possessed by someone that is the result of language skills, namely reading and writing, to produce and manipulate scientific, linguistic, and grammatical analysis, produce oral texts and written texts, and from the impact of human history towards the philosophical and social development of Western education (Kissel, Hathaway, & Wood, 2010). Literacy is deeply influenced by context. Each person and each use of literacy is situated in a world that is interactional, shaped by certain ideologies, and in which changes occur as the context shifts (Arslan, 2013; Daley, 2003).

2.4.1 Multimedia Learning

Research on multimedia learning suggests that integrating multiple types of representations (e.g., verbal and nonverbal) better supports meaningful learning than relying on verbal representations alone (Ainsworth, 2021). Visual representations employ a range of modes, from symbols to pictures and from space to portray specific concepts, notions, or ideas.

© University of Venda

The spatial arrangement of symbolic information in a visual text can help students organize it more effectively by highlighting relationships between concepts. Examples of visual representations include pictorial diagrams, concept maps, timelines, and hierarchies. According to the cognitive theory of multimedia learning (Mayer, 2014), students learn more effectively when studying texts with visuals rather than just text alone, because integrating verbal and nonverbal representations supports the construction of a coherent mental model.

Specifically, learning from text and visuals is effective because it promotes *generative processes,* in which students select the most relevant information from the learning material, organize it into a coherent structure, and integrate it with prior knowledge (Fiorella & Mayer, 2016). These three processes constitute what Mayer (2011, 2014) referred to as the Select-Organize-Integrate (SOI) component of the cognitive theory of multimedia learning and are necessary for fostering meaningful learning.

2.5 The Role of Cartoons as An Educational Tool in EFAL Classrooms

Cartoons can function as a means for language and literacy development. As Narayan (2016) has argued, they are a popular art form, especially among children, and as such provide a potential medium for education and communication. Cartoons are pictorial depictions of events, concepts, or everyday situations, often satirical and featuring humorous characters (Narayan, 2016).

As a starting point, the language used in cartoons is important for understanding their visual cues. Learners should be aware of language items and should assess their linguistic functions by analyzing speech components, such as pronouns, prepositions, phrasal verbs, and the pragmatic meaning of words (Abuzahra et al., 2016). Cartoons enable students to construct meanings from paralinguistic effects that accompany written language. This approach draws on and develops learners' social and cognitive skills, which they will continue to utilize in their daily lives (Abuzahra et al., 2016).

Cartoons can play a significant role in developing language and literacy, and numerous studies support this claim. A study conducted by Narayan (2016) surveyed a sample of children in schools and found that approximately 80 percent preferred to start reading

© University of Venda

their newspapers by watching cartoons. This means that learners are exposed to cartoons and understand how cartoons function when they view them at home. These Indian learners not only view TV animated cartoons but also choose to view them as two-dimensional printed materials

Baker (2015) argues that our perception of pictures depends on our existing schema, a product of memories and past experiences unique to each person. Furthermore, because the interpretation of what we see is subjective, analyzing images provides opportunities for meaningful student-to-student interaction (Baker, 2015). Teachers' personal interpretations are also important because they shape how learners improve their skills in interpreting visual stimuli. Specifically, the study seeks to understand how learners interpret visual images and how teachers develop their interpretive skills in the school classroom. There is a close relationship between language development and literacy skills, and visual images can be effective tools for developing these skills. This study argues that language and literacy can be developed in classrooms by focusing on visual images.

2.6 Reading Texts with Multiple Modes of Representation

Learning from multiple representations fosters these three processes by directing learners' attention toward the relevant information in an instructional message, encoding concepts based on how they are associated with each other (organising), and activating prior knowledge associated with the learning material (integration), such that the two become associated in memory (Dunlosky et al., 2013).

In an experiment by Purnell and Solman (1991; Experiment 1), 75 high school learners were asked to read a geography text and either study it alone, study the information as an illustration, or study the information as text and an illustration. Results indicated that students who studied both the text and visuals showed improved comprehension compared to students who viewed either representation individually. The researchers replicated these results in three additional experiments (Butcher, 2006, Experiments 2, 4, and 5). Evidence from these experiments supports that learning from textual or visual representations alone is suboptimal. Instead, learning is best supported when both representations are presented together in a multimedia lesson.

© University of Venda

Multimedia instruction also benefits learning because it maximizes the use of students' limited working memory capacity. According to dual coding theory (Clark & Paivio, 1991) and the cognitive theory of multimedia learning (Mayer, 2014), students process multimedia presentations through separate verbal and visual channels. However, each of these channels has a limited capacity for processing information in working memory.

Therefore, when learning with multimedia, complex information is divided between verbal and visual channels so that neither channel is overloaded with complex processing. This effect is particularly beneficial for students with limited prior knowledge (Mayer, 2024). For example, Huynh and Yang (2024) found that students with low prior knowledge learned best from a biology lecture when they were also provided with knowledge maps to scaffold their learning. Meanwhile, in the same lecture, students with high prior knowledge learned better when lists were used. Overall, learning with multimedia helps manage the complex processing of information, particularly for students with lower levels of background knowledge.

Multimedia lessons also help students manage complex concepts that require high cognitive demand. They may also provide students with well-organized and accurate representations of the learning material. In essence, visual representations organize concepts and relationships coherently, so students do not have to work to establish their own relationships among the concepts. For example, in a study by Trumpower and Goldsmith (2004), the researchers provided students with an interactive overview of computer programming concepts that were organized either alphabetically (e.g., concepts presented A-Z), randomly (e.g., concepts presented in no specific order), or based on an expert-structured (e.g., coherently organized). Interactive overviews were presented as electronic text and were like graphic organizers, in which information is organized according to how smaller concepts are related to and subsumed by larger ones.

Results indicated that students performed significantly better on a transfer test when learning from expert-structured overviews than from alphabetically or randomly structured overviews. These findings suggest that students benefit from studying well-organized

© University of Venda

representations because they do not have to actively build their own relationships and connections among concepts from the learning material (i.e., as in unstructured visual representations or in the absence of visual representations).

Gurlitt and Renkl (2010) also found evidence for the benefit of well-organized visual representations. In this experiment, 42 students were assigned to study either a high-coherence concept map (provided map) or a low-coherence concept map (map without links) about economics. A concept map uses nodes and links to spatially arrange the relationships among relevant concepts. In a concept map, nodes represent concepts, and links represent relationships between them. In this study, students studied either a full concept map with nodes and links or an incomplete concept map with only nodes and no links. After studying, students took a post-test about what they learned. Learning outcomes showed that students who studied high-coherence concept maps significantly outperformed those who studied low-coherence concept maps. Overall, the findings from this research suggest that multimedia learning materials are most beneficial when the representations are designed to help students organize relevant concepts and their relationships coherently.

The previous findings, as in Trumpower & Goldsmith (2004) and Gurlitt & Renkl (2010), suggest that the design of multimedia representations is an important consideration when learning from text and visuals. Research on designing multimedia learning materials has focused on three primary areas: the first is general principles for designing multimedia learning environments; the second is designing representations based on their pedagogical function; and the third is how different types of visuals affect cognitive processing and learning. The following sections outline each of these design components, along with the research that supports their importance.

2.7 Limiting Extraneous Material in A Lesson

According to Mayer (2014), one pertinent multimedia design challenge is ensuring students' attention is directed toward relevant features that foster generative processing and away from irrelevant features that hamper learning (i.e., extraneous processing). One of the best ways to limit extraneous processing is to design a multimedia lesson that focuses students' attention only on features that help them build a coherent mental model

© University of Venda

of the material. Mayer (2014) suggests doing this by designing multimedia lessons according to three principles: the coherence principle, the redundancy principle, and the signaling principle.

Furthermore, Schieble (2011) conducted a case study that was divided into two parts. First, the ways in which preservice English teachers explored the construction of race and identity in graphic novels were examined. Secondly, the effects of multimodal texts on adolescents' critical awareness of racism in the United States were explored. Schieble found that preservice teachers assisted students in developing critical awareness, but neither preservice teachers nor students identified racism as a structural problem; it was seen as an individual-level problem. Students, however, demonstrated the ability to make intertextual connections (from other modes) to the graphic novel. Much of this was facilitated by their prior knowledge of and experiences with computers.

In brief, the coherence principle emphasizes the importance of removing unnecessary content—such as irrelevant images, background music, or decorative text—that does not directly support the learning objective. This helps reduce extraneous cognitive load and allows learners to focus on essential material. The redundancy principle suggests that people learn better from graphics and narration alone, as presenting the same information in multiple formats—like adding identical on-screen text—can overwhelm working memory and hinder learning (Mayer, 2023; Digital Learning Institute, 2024). Meanwhile, the signaling principle asserts that learners benefit when cues such as arrows, highlights, or verbal emphasis are used to draw attention to key information and clarify structure, thereby enhancing comprehension and retention (Fiorella & Mayer, 2022; Horvath, 2024). It remains one of the emerging pedagogical challenges for practicing educational practitioners, who may need to make an informed decision that yields the best result in line with the learning context.

The next section focuses on the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. The tenets who coined the theory are identified, and the propositions that make up the theory are explicated with justifications also provided in line with the aim and the objectives of the study.

© University of Venda

2.8 Theoretical Framework

Luft et.al (2022) describe a theoretical framework as “the structure that supports and describes a theory… presenting a systematic view of phenomena by describing the relationship among the variables for explaining these phenomena”. It serves as a roadmap for the research process, guiding the formulation of questions, the methodology, and the analysis.

Similarly, van der Waldt (2024;1-12) explains that a theoretical framework “provides a structure for research by linking the study to existing theories, concepts, or models… ensuring the study is grounded in established knowledge and contributes meaningfully to the field”

2.8.1 Relevance Theory

The current study is underpinned by Relevance Theory, developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in the 1980s. It is defined as a cognitive theory of communication and an influential framework in the field of pragmatics. As a subfield of linguistics, it examines how people use and understand language in specific contexts. The theory emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a cognition-centered alternative to Grice’s cooperation-based explanation of human communication (Wilson & Sperber, 1981). Since then, it has been a highly influential theory in pragmatics, generating a substantial number of studies that support, critique, or apply it to various pragmatic research areas. This is because the theory is often applied to studies that attempt to understand how readers process information and make inferences (Wilson, 2019). When applied to reading and inferences, the theory offers insight into how readers comprehend texts and draw conclusions. The theory is based on the principle that communication is guided by the concept of relevance, which refers to the ability of information to provide cognitive benefits to the recipient with minimal processing effort (Johnson, 2024).

Relevance theory (RT), like other broadly Gricean approaches to pragmatics, takes as its starting point three of Grice’s assumptions about verbal communication. The first is that a sentence's meaning is a vehicle for conveying a speaker’s meaning, whereas a speaker’s meaning is an overtly expressed intention that is fulfilled by being recognized.

© University of Venda

2.8.2 Foundations of Relevance Theory: Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995)

The foundational work on Relevance Theory by Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995) focuses on the idea that communication involves the exchange of information that is relevant to the listener. They argue that speakers encode information with the expectation that it will be processed in a way that maximizes relevance, meaning the information that produces the greatest cognitive outcome for the least effort. This foundational concept has significantly influenced the discourse surrounding cognitive pragmatics and the study of communication (Sperber & Wilson, 1986).

2.8.3 Relationship between Relevance Theory (RT) and Discourse Analysis (DA)

Wilson and Sperber (2004) focus on the relationship between RT and DA, offering an exploration of how the theory can be applied to the analysis of conversation and narrative structures. Their review examines how discourse markers, such as "so" and "well," guide the relevance of information in conversation, shaping the flow of dialogue and the inferences interlocutors draw. This work demonstrates how RT offers a valuable lens for examining the interactive and dynamic nature of communication (Wilson & Sperber, 2004).

Wilson & Sperber (2001) provide a review that ties RT to cognitive science, particularly in terms of how the brain processes information during communication. He discusses how the brain filters and processes information based on relevance, focusing on the cognitive resources required for interpreting meaning in different communicative contexts. Sperber's review highlights the significance of cognitive mechanisms in communication and offers empirical evidence for RT (Wilson & Sperber, 2001).

RT has proven to be a robust framework for understanding communication, both in linguistic and cognitive terms. While it offers a valuable tool for analyzing language processing, interpretation, and inference, scholars continue to debate its applicability across contexts, particularly in non-verbal and cross-cultural communication. Continued research has focused on refining the theory to better account for social, contextual, and cognitive factors in communication.

© University of Venda

2.8.4 Application to Pragmatics

In agreement with Carston (2002), Wilson (2024) reaffirmed how Relevance Theory applies to various aspects of pragmatics, including implicature, reference, and disambiguation. Carston demonstrates how Relevance Theory can account for the interpretation of indirect speech acts, presuppositions, and scalar implicatures. She argues that the theory provides a unified framework for understanding how people derive meaning from context, suggesting that the principle of relevance explains a wide range of communicative phenomena (Wilson, 2024).

Johnson (2024) identifies areas for further development, noting that the theory's focus on the cognitive aspects of communication overlooks the social and cultural dimensions of language use. Huang's review highlights debates regarding the theory's applicability to non-verbal communication and its handling of non-literal meanings. He also discusses developments in cognitive science that could further refine the theory, particularly regarding the neural mechanisms underlying relevance-driven processes (Johnson, 2024).

Secondly, a speaker's meaning cannot be simply perceived or decoded, but must be inferred from his or her behaviour, together with contextual information. Furthermore, in inferring a speaker's meaning, the hearer is guided by the expectation that communicative behaviour should meet certain standards.

RT, then, treats utterance comprehension as an inferential process that takes as input the production of an utterance by a speaker, together with contextual information, and yields as output an interpretation of the speaker's meaning. Utterance comprehension is seen as essentially an exercise in mind-reading, and the challenge for relevance theorists attempting to build a psychologically plausible, empirically testable pragmatic theory is precisely to explain how the closed formal system of language provides effective pieces of evidence which, combined with contextual information, enable successful comprehension to take place

RT claims that the key element in human communication is the recognition of the speaker's intentions, which are guided by ordinary, cognitive inferential processes. The theory claims that mere decoding of linguistic stimuli never achieves communication;

© University of Venda

communication also involves interpreting contextual cues and using them as evidence for inferring the speaker's intentions. When the speaker says something, the hearer assumes that the message is relevant to the discourse context and thus seeks the most relevant and easily accessible interpretation of the intended meaning. The linguistic structure of an utterance determines only a fraction of what is intended, whereas context plays a crucial role in the interpretation of meaning.

In RT, context is not limited to external factors such as the physical environment or the immediately preceding discourse. A set of all the assumptions that the hearer has about the world, including “expectations about future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about the mental state of the speaker,” contributes equally to the meaning interpretation. (Romero-Trillo, 2023; Wilson, 2024; and Johnson, 2024).

RT also introduces the concept of cognitive environment, namely the set of all the facts that the hearer is aware of or can become aware of in the environment of utterance. Utterance interpretation is considered a global process because the hearer draws on all conceptual information available in their cognitive environment. RT also emphasizes the relationship between contextual effects and processing effort. RT claims that humans process information as productively as possible. When people interpret a message, many different assumptions from diverse sources come to mind. Among them, they select the most immediately relevant interpretation that has the greatest contextual effects for the smallest (Taguchi, 2002; Wilson, 2024; Madella et al., 2023).

The theory assumes that humans have a biological ability to maximise the relevance of stimuli, such as linguistic utterances and communicative behaviour. Relevance applies to both external stimuli (e.g., utterances) and internal representations/thoughts, which can serve as inputs to cognitive processing.

This theory can be summed up in four statements (Wilson, 2024)

(a) The sentence's decoded meaning is compatible with multiple interpretations in the same context. Such multiple interpretations could be attributed to the reader's inferential repertoire, global cultural competency, as well as comprehension aptitude.

© University of Venda

(b) These interpretations are ranked according to accessibility; the keyword is accessibility. Information or meaning in cartoons is presented in different modes: sentences or words, gestures (expressions, movements, etc.) Semiotics, spatial semiotics (space, proximity, positionalities, and visual semiotics, shape, designs, texture

c) Hearers use a strong criterion to choose the most appropriate interpretation, and whether they have the skills to interpret and make plausible inferences on given cartoons is what this study strives to discover.

(d) This criterion allows the hearer to choose one interpretation from the range of possible interpretations to the extent that the hearer will stop at this point when the first interpretation is thought to be a candidate matching the intended interpretation.

The theory assumes a level of shared knowledge that may not be universal. Different cultural or personal backgrounds can lead to different interpretations of relevance. Moreover, RT also provides a framework for understanding how human communication works beyond mere sentence structure and grammar. It highlights the role of inference, context, and cognitive effort in understanding meaning, making it an important tool in pragmatics, linguistics, and cognitive science.

In essence, relevance theory is underpinned by the following propositions:

2.8.5 Text comprehension

Relevance theory posits that readers seek to maximize relevance by balancing cognitive effort and contextual effects. This means readers focus on information that provides the most significant understanding with the least effort (Wilson, 2019). Comprehension begins with identifying the logical form of an utterance, which is then enriched with explicit or implicit information.

In nonverbal communication, ostensive stimuli often augment prior linguistic cues, facilitating the audience's recognition of the communicator's intentions. However, in certain instances, the behaviour exhibited provides indirect evidence, necessitating the audience's inferential process to derive the intended meaning based on the presumption of contextual relevance.

© University of Venda

Even though there is no distinct, identifiable layer of information for the listener to extract directly, utterances still carry meanings. This is possible because they encode logical forms (conceptual representations, even if incomplete or partial), which the speaker intentionally provides as input for the inferential comprehension process. Consequently, verbal communication can achieve a level of clarity that is not possible in non-verbal communication. For instance, instead of simply pointing to a table with glasses, ashtrays, and plates, one might say, "My glass is empty," which adds explicitness to the communication. Although the decoded logical form of an utterance is an important clue to the speaker's intentions, it is now increasingly recognized that even the explicit content of an utterance may go well beyond what is linguistically encoded.

In relevance theory, determining explicit content is considered inferential and is governed by the Communicative Principle of Relevance, which governs the interpretation of implicatures. The relevance-theoretic comprehension process applies similarly to resolving linguistic ambiguities at both explicit and implicit levels. The listener's objective is to formulate a hypothesis about the speaker's meaning that aligns with the relevance assumption implied by the utterance.

Grice's interpretation of irony is a variation of the traditional rhetorical view, which holds that an ironical utterance literally expresses one thing but figuratively may convey the opposite. There are well-known criticisms of this view. It is descriptively inadequate because forms of irony like understatements, quotations, and allusions do not communicate the opposite of what is said. It is also theoretically insufficient, as stating the opposite of what one means is clearly irrational. Furthermore, this account fails to explain why irony is universally understood and seems to emerge spontaneously, without formal teaching (Sperber & Wilson 1981, 1998b, Wilson &Sperber 1992).

From a relevance theory perspective, verbal irony does not require any special mechanisms or processes beyond those needed to account for basic language use, interpretive use, and a specific form of interpretive use known as echoic use. An utterance can be interpretively used to (meta) represent another utterance or thought that it closely resembles in content. The most common form of interpretive use is found in reported

© University of Venda

speech or thought. An utterance is echoic when its primary relevance comes from expressing the speaker's attitude toward views they attribute to someone else.

2.8.6 Inferential Processes

As readers engage with a text, they use contextual clues and background knowledge to infer meanings that are not explicitly stated. This inferential process is guided by the principle of relevance, where readers aim to derive the most meaningful interpretations from the text (Wilson, 2019).

In Relevance Theory (RT), a framework for understanding communication and cognition, inferential processes play a crucial role in how humans interpret meaning from utterances. Relevance Theory emphasizes that communication is guided by the principle of relevance, which posits that humans tend to focus on information that provides the greatest cognitive benefit with the least cognitive effort. Inferential processes are the cognitive mechanisms by which individuals draw conclusions from this principle.

2.8.7 Inferential Communication:

Relevance Theory suggests that much communication involves inference. When a speaker says something, the listener not only takes the words at face value but also uses context, background knowledge, and assumptions to infer the speaker's intended meaning. This process often goes beyond what is explicitly said. The implications for Language Understanding are as follows:

2.8.8 Implicature:

According to Relevance Theory, implicatures (implied meanings not stated) are derived from the expectation of relevance. It is what is suggested or implied in a conversation, even though it is not explicitly stated. For instance, as per the cartoon below, the speaker says, ***"It's cold in here.***"

© University of Venda

Figure 1: Example of Implicature

The possible implicatures of the statement**:** **<u>It is cold in here</u>** may be one of the following implied meanings:

Please close the window.

Can we turn on the heater?

I wish I had a blanket.

Since it is not explicitly stated, the interpreter uses contextual clues to infer exactly what the speaker may be implying.

2.8.9 Direct vs. Indirect Communication:

Relevance Theory emphasizes that indirect communication (such as hints or suggestions) can be more efficient than direct communication because the listener is expected to infer the implied meaning, requiring less explicit signaling from the speaker. (Lee& Pinker, 2010).

2.8.10 Context and Cognitive Environment

Relevance Theory posits that understanding an utterance involves integrating the new information provided by the speaker with the listener's existing context. Context, in this

© University of Venda

sense, refers to the cognitive environment of the listener, including all the facts, assumptions, beliefs, and prior experiences relevant to the communication.

When a listener hears an utterance, they use their cognitive environment to generate potential interpretations. The relevance of these interpretations is then evaluated based on the cognitive effort required to process them and the benefits they provide, such as new information, updating existing knowledge, and resolving ambiguities (Peelle, 2018).

2.8.11 The Principle of Relevance

The Principle of Relevance is the foundation of Relevance Theory, which suggests that human cognition is optimized for efficiency and relevance. Two key aspects are:

The cognitive effect, which is the extent to which an interpretation of an utterance contributes to resolving a problem, filling a gap in knowledge, or updating an individual's beliefs, and effort, which is the mental effort needed to process and integrate the new information (Gieshoff & Heeb, 2023). Therefore, the listener's inferential process aims to maximize cognitive effect while minimizing effort. This involves evaluating possible interpretations of an utterance and selecting the most relevant one.

2.8.12 Inference in Communication

The process of inference in Relevance Theory occurs when a listener derives meaning from an utterance by filling in gaps in the communicated message. (Allott, 2013). Since utterances typically do not contain all possible details, listeners often need to infer additional information, make assumptions, and apply background knowledge.

When people communicate, they choose to convey information that they expect their audience to find relevant. This principle assumes that speakers provide cues to guide the listener toward the most relevant interpretations of the message. (Allott, 2013). This is why context plays a critical role in determining how a message is understood. Listeners use their background knowledge and context to interpret what is being communicated.

2.8.13 Explicit vs. Implicit Meaning

Some meaning is explicitly stated in the utterance (e.g., "*The cat is on the mat"),* but much is implicit, relying on the listener's background knowledge and contextual clues. Inferences about what the speaker meant often include implicatures (inferences beyond

© University of Venda

the literal meaning) or assumptions about intentions, which are drawn based on context and relevance (Atlas, 2005).

2.8.14 Code vs. Inference

Sperber and Wilson propose an inferential model of communication in which the interpreter's inferential activity takes precedence over message decoding. This differs from the code model, which assumes messages are simply coded and decoded. This approach views decoding utterances as evidence of the speaker's meaning, rather than determining their interpretation. Verbal communication uses a code (language grammar), but inference transforms it into propositional interpretations. One of the most interesting contributions of RT is the claim that there is a large gap between the (coded) sentence meaning and the (inferred) speaker's meaning, which must be filled by inference.

The listener then generates hypotheses about the speaker's intentions and meaning, which are tested against the context and their expectations of relevance. If the context does not support a hypothesis or leads to unnecessary cognitive effort, it is discarded in favour of another, more relevant interpretation, referred to as Hypothesis testing.

2.9 Types of Inferences

In Relevance Theory, there are two types of inferences that occur when interpreting communication (Wilson, 2018):

2.9.1 Explicatures: These are inferences that involve the explicit content of an utterance. They are what the speaker literally conveys, which may include elaborations of the speaker's meaning. For instance, "She has three kids" might lead to an Explicatures of the number of children the person has.

2.9.2 Implicatures: These are inferences that go beyond what is explicitly said. They are context-dependent and rely on the listener's knowledge of the world (Wlson, 2018). For example, if someone says, "It's getting late," an implicature might be that they want to leave soon. Implicatures can be conversational (arising from the context of conversation) or conventional (based on specific language conventions).

© University of Venda

2.9.3 Mutual Manifestness

Another key concept in inferential processes is mutual manifestness, which holds that for an interpretation to be successful, it must be shared between the speaker and the listener (Horváth, 2012). The listener's inferences must align with the speaker's expectations for the communication to be successful. This involves shared assumptions, knowledge, and intentions. For example, when a speaker says, "Can you pass me the salt?" the listener must infer that the request is about the salt on the table, not just the generic concept of salt, because the table context makes it manifest to both parties.

2.9.4 Processing Models

The expectancy model can describe the inferential process in which the listener forms expectations about what will be said based on context. They actively test these expectations through inferencing processes. If an utterance is consistent with these expectations, it is processed with minimal effort. If it is inconsistent, the listener engages in deeper inference to resolve the ambiguity or make sense of the message (Rost, 2005:. 519-520).

Inferential processes in Relevance Theory involve using context, background knowledge, and cognitive resources to derive the most relevant interpretation of an utterance. By focusing on minimizing cognitive effort while maximizing cognitive effect, the listener efficiently decodes meaning, even when much of the meaning is not explicitly stated. These processes are crucial for understanding communication in a rich, context-dependent way, emphasizing the role of inferencing in human interaction. (Winn & Teece, 2021).

2.9.5 Contextual Enrichment

Relevance theory suggests that the meaning of an utterance or text is often incomplete without context. Readers enrich the text with their own knowledge and context to form a complete understanding (Wilson, 2019).

Contextual Enrichment is a key concept in Relevance Theory, a cognitive theory of communication and interpretation developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson. RT proposes that communication relies on the hearer's ability to infer meaning from context

© University of Venda

and relevance, and that the principle of maximizing relevance guides the interpretation of utterances (Allott, 2013).

Contextual Enrichment refers to the process by which hearers expand and adjust the context of an utterance to enhance its interpretation, making it more specific or fitting to the context in which it is being used. In Relevance Theory, context is not merely a static background of facts or information; it is actively shaped during communication as individuals interpret and modify it, taking into account the speaker's utterances.

2.10 Key Aspects of Contextual Enrichment:

Implicit Information: Contextual enrichment is often used to interpret implicit or indirect information that is not explicitly stated. For example, in an utterance like “It’s cold in here,” the hearer might infer that the speaker wants the window closed or the heater turned on. The implicit message is enriched by considering context (e.g., location, time of day, or past conversations) to infer what the speaker might be suggesting.

Adjusting Reference: Sometimes, a speaker’s reference can be vague or general (e.g., "the book"). The hearer needs to use contextual cues to enrich the meaning and figure out which specific book the speaker is referring to. Contextual enrichment helps narrow down vague or ambiguous references to a specific instance.

Presuppositions and Inferences: Contextual enrichment enables the hearer to infer shared knowledge. If a speaker says, “John stopped smoking,” the hearer may infer that John used to smoke. This inference is part of enriching the context based on prior knowledge and shared background.

Accommodation of Contextual Information: Relevance Theory emphasizes that the hearer draws from shared context and accommodates new context as the conversation develops. For example, new information from the speaker might adjust the context, refining understanding of the utterance.

Real-world Knowledge: Contextual enrichment draws on both the immediate conversational context and broader world knowledge. This could include knowledge of cultural references, the physical environment, social norms, and shared experiences.

© University of Venda

Examples of Contextual Enrichment:

Direct Speech:

Utterance: “She has an angelic voice.”

Contextual enrichment: Based on the context, the hearer might enrich the statement to mean that "she" sings at concerts or has a musical career.

Analogy making, complimenting. Direct comparison etc

Metaphorical Speech:

Utterance: “The city is a jungle.”

Contextual enrichment: The hearer enriches the metaphor with contextual information, such as associating the city with a chaotic or wild environment, based on their own experiences or knowledge.

Direct comparison, what happens in the jungle, the implication is survival of the fittest

Presupposition:

Utterance: “I enjoyed the movie.”

Contextual enrichment: The hearer enriches the context by understanding that the speaker watched a movie in the past and is now expressing their enjoyment.

2.11 Contextual Enrichment and Relevance

In RT, communication is driven by the assumption that human cognition is geared toward maximizing relevance—i.e., getting the most meaningful or useful information with the least cognitive effort. Contextual enrichment contributes to this process by helping the hearer maximize the interpretative payoff from an utterance, ensuring that the meaning derived fits well within the context and resonates with what the speaker likely intended.

In summary, contextual enrichment in RT enables hearers to use existing context to make sense of utterances, thereby maximizing the relevance of the communication. It involves inferring and filling in implicit details, adjusting vague references, and drawing on

© University of Venda

immediate and broader contextual knowledge to derive a more specific, relevant meaning.

2.12 Cognitive Economy

Relevance theory argues that readers make inferences by selecting the most relevant information that requires the least cognitive effort. This efficiency in processing facilitates the quick understanding and interpretation of text (Wilson, 2019).

Grounded in relevance theory, any internal or external stimulus capable of influencing cognitive processes can evoke relevance for an individual at a given time. Conversational statements invoke expectations of relevance primarily because of the inherent cognitive proclivity to seek relevance rather than to adhere to communicative conventions such as the Cooperative Principle.

According to RT, input is deemed relevant to an individual when it is processed in the context of existing assumptions, which yields a significant cognitive consequence. Significant cognitive consequences include meaningful alterations in an individual's understanding of reality, such as substantiated conclusions. Conversely, inconclusive conclusions are not considered cognitively significant (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

A paradigmatic example of the cognitive effect is the contextual implication, a logical consequence that emerges from integrating input and contextual information yet cannot be derived from either aspect in isolation. For instance, upon observing the arrival of my train, I may consult my watch and find that it is running behind schedule. This contextual implication may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding by combining it with additional contextual assumptions, thereby yielding further inferences.

Cognitive dissonances are characterised by the redefinition, revision, or rejection of prevailing knowledge constructs. For example, observing a delayed train arrival may confirm declining transportation services or necessitate adjusting daily routines. In accordance with relevance theory, an input correlates with an individual's knowledge only when corresponding cognitive processing yields corroborative enhancements to existing knowledge constructs.

© University of Venda

2.13 Cognitive Principle of Relevance

This principle suggests that humans naturally focus on information that provides the greatest cognitive benefit for the least mental effort. In other words, people expect the information they receive to be worth their attention because it will help them understand something new or fill a knowledge gap without requiring too much effort.

2.14 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted reviews of the literature by other researchers and scholars on the conception of reading and its gradual shift to account for texts that are both linguistic and non-linguistic. It also explicated the theoretical framework underlying the study, including its principles, propositions, and premises. The next chapter represents the research methodology used in the study.

© University of Venda

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter describes and explains the research design, methodology, and data-collection procedures. It describes the study's design, sampling methods, data collection, and analysis procedures. Methodology and research design guide the researcher in planning and carrying out the study most effectively to achieve the study's aim.

3.2. Research Design

Research design is a broad framework that outlines the overall plan for conducting research. It specifies objectives, data collection, analysis methods, hours of work, price, duty, conclusion, and actions (Pawar, 2020). The procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting, and reporting data in research projects, as in Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:58), constitute what is referred to as research designs. It is the general strategy for integrating conceptual research concerns with relevant (and attainable) actual research. In other words, the study design establishes the techniques for gathering and analysing the essential data, the methodologies to be used to collect and analyse the data, and how all of this will be used to answer the research question (Grey, 2014).

According to Robson (2002), there are three study designs: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. His classification is based on the study area's objective, as each design serves a distinct end goal. For example, a descriptive study aims to paint a picture of a scenario, person, or event, or to demonstrate how things are related to one another and how they occur naturally (Blumberg, Cooper, and Schindler, 2005). On the other hand, descriptive studies cannot explain why an event occurred and are best suited for a very new or uncharted research field (Punch, 2005).

© University of Venda

3.2.1 Exploratory research design

Exploratory research is carried out when there is little knowledge about a phenomenon or an issue that has not been precisely characterised (Saunders et al., 2007). It does not seek to provide definitive or conclusive solutions to the research questions, but rather to examine the research issue at varying depths. As a result, its theme is to address new challenges with little or no prior research (Brown, 2006). Even in the most extreme cases, exploratory research serves as the foundation for a more conclusive study, determining the initial research design, sample methodology, and data-gathering method (Singh, 2007).

3.2.2 Descriptive research design

Descriptive research is an approach that systematically observes and quantifies features of a population or phenomenon without altering the variables. To address basic questions such as what, where, when, and how, this kind of research focuses on providing a thorough description of the topic being studied. Descriptive research is a crucial tool across many disciplines, such as the social sciences, market research, and health studies, because it captures the essence of the subject matter and provides a basis for further analysis and investigation (Stanley, 2023).

Descriptive studies aim to characterize people, things, or circumstances by observing them in their natural settings. The researcher alters none of the variables but instead focuses only on describing the variables and/or the sample. Descriptive studies are the only designs that can investigate a single variable and several variables. Descriptive studies examine the features of a population, identify issues that emerge in a group, an organization, or a population, or examine differences in traits or customs amongst institutions or even nations. (Ghanad, 2023).

Descriptive research design aims to provide an accurate account of characteristics or behaviours within a population, typically without manipulating variables. This approach is often used to understand a given group or situation (Babbie, 2010).

© University of Venda

3.2.3 Explanatory research design

Explanatory research design explores a new universe that has not been studied previously (Inaam, 2016). It is also defined as a research project on a specific topic that has not previously been studied or adequately explained. The primary goal of this research design is to become acquainted with the unknown (Inaam, 2016). For example, explanatory design would be ideal if you want to understand why a certain number of people are purchasing a product, why companies change their business processes, or what motivates people in their workplaces.

Explanatory research design always begins with a theory or hypothesis and then approves or disapproves the theory after gathering evidence. The explanatory study always includes a set of concepts that guide the researcher in their search for facts (Inaam, 2016).

3.3. Research Approach

A research approach refers to the systematic method used to gather, analyse, and interpret data in a study. It outlines the steps researchers follow to answer their research questions and ensures the process is logical, repeatable, and scientifically sound. Different research approaches are used depending on the study's goals, the nature of the data, and the type of research problem being addressed (Goundar, 2012: 26-30). Research approach can be categorized into qualitative and quantitative, depending on the type of data sought. Also, a combination of these methods is known as a mixed-methods study, which combines the advantages of both methods (Taherdoost, 2022). For the purposes of this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted.

3.3.1 Qualitative research approach

The qualitative approach to information gathering focuses on an in-depth description of the phenomenon under study (Adedoyin, 2020). This is typically done through interviews, document reviews, open-ended questions, or focus groups. In most cases, it may not be compelling to include many participants, as the intention is often not to generalize, and because it requires significant time and resources. However, this research can lead to

© University of Venda

larger studies and a deeper understanding, influencing theory and practice (Adedoyin, 2020).

It is a useful method for studying a phenomenon with limited accessible information, as it is exploratory in nature. Thus, the qualitative approach can help uncover new insights and generate new theories. It often focuses on findings from events in a particular context at a specific time, without considering the consequences and results that may occur in the future or in other contexts, thereby limiting the generalisability of the study's results [Crocker & Heigham, (2009); Jixing & Shiyi, (2019)].

3.3.2 Benefits of the qualitative

Qualitative research offers a profound and intricate understanding of complex matters, behaviours, and motivations by examining participants' viewpoints and experiences (Lim, 2025). This is the phenomenon under study. The current study explored learners' interpretations of cartoons and the challenges they encounter when decoding their subtle or overt meanings.

Furthermore, qualitative studies often afford researchers greater flexibility (Rahman et al., 2021). In line with this advantageous aspect of adaptability, the researcher had the opportunity to adjust the approach based on emerging data and insights, resulting in rich data generation. This descriptive data enabled the researcher to establish patterns and themes that might be missed with quantitative methods.

Qualitative studies provide researchers with contextual Insights (Halme et al, 2024). These insights could be unique to participants' experiences, challenges, and perspectives, which helps isolate a given case for an in-depth study. The current study profiled two schools from different quintiles, with participants purposively selected based on grade-level achievement: higher, average, and below-average achievers.

A qualitative approach to studies is inherently exploratory in nature and design (Casula et al., 2020). The interpretation of cartoons is key to emerging, new, and multimodal literacies. While traditional literacies focused primarily on linear, print-based alphabetic

© University of Venda

letters, the central objective of the current study is reading non-linguistic signs on visuals such as cartoons and infographics.

3.4. Application

For the purposes of this study, an exploratory and descriptive design was adopted. The latter explored the interpretative challenges experienced when decoding subtle and overt meanings in a given cartoon. On the other hand, the former was adopted to offer insights into learners' interpretative repertoire when decoding linguistic and non-linguistic signs in selected cartoons from a given formative assessment task.

3.5. Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is defined as the researcher's thinking, philosophical orientation, or perspective that influences what should be studied, how it should be studied, and how the study's results should be interpreted (Okesina, 2020). It is important to note that paradigm issues are crucial; as a result, a researcher should be clear about which paradigm informs and guides their research. In other words, the choice of paradigm sets down the intent, motivation, and expectations for research. Thus, without adopting a paradigm as the first step, there is no foundation for subsequent choices regarding methodology, design, and method (Okesina, 2020).

There are several paradigms in the literature, but there is no agreement on the acceptable number of classifications. For example, Scotland (2012) and Shah and AlBargi (2013) classified research paradigms into three: Positivism, Interpretivism/Constructivism, and Critical theory. Guba and Lincoln (1994) classified research paradigms into four categories: positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, and critical theory. Similarly, Saunders et al. (2019) classified paradigms into five: positivism, initial realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism.

© University of Venda

3.5.1 Positivism (or positivist paradigm)

The Positivist paradigm is popularized by Augustine Comte, who interprets it as a philosophy that relies on observation and reason to understand human behaviour, or as a view that sees human beings as phenomena that can be studied scientifically. In other words, it reduces human beings into variables that can be studied scientifically. At the ontological level, positivists assume a realist stance or a single reality (Fard, 2012; Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013), implying that reality is objective, quantifiable, and measurable through processes independent of the researcher's intervention. Being inclined to a quantitative research approach, this paradigm is not applicable to the current study.

3.5.2 The pragmatic paradigm

The pragmatic paradigm was introduced to end what was known as the "paradigm war" between the positivists and the interpretivists. This paradigm arose among philosophers who argued that it was not possible to understand the "truth" of the real world solely through a single scientific method, as advocated by the positivist paradigm, nor to determine social reality as constructed under the interpretivist paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

3.5.3 Interpretivism

The central point of the interpretivist paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022). This means that a concerted effort is made to understand the viewpoint of the research observer or researcher. This paradigm emphasizes understanding individuals and their interpretations of the world. For this reason, interpretive researchers start with individuals and seek to understand their interpretations of the world around them, while the actual words of individuals serve as evidence of realities (Krauss, 2005). This means that reality is interpreted through the meanings people give to their lives, and these meanings can be discovered through language or dialogue. Given its consideration of readers' subjectivity, the interpretivist paradigm is applicable to this study. An interpretative paradigm was applied in this research, as it holds that multiple realities exist rather than a single reality.

© University of Venda

3.6. Population

A population is a cornerstone of research methodology, comprising individuals who share characteristics within a defined geographic or institutional domain (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016). This concept lays the groundwork for research endeavours, establishing the overarching framework for formulating research questions and hypotheses. The population provides researchers with a comprehensive understanding of the group under study, facilitating the exploration of various phenomena and phenomena (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016).

3.6.1 Target population

The population of this study constitutes a subset of the broader population being investigated, characterised by specific attributes or criteria directly relevant to the research inquiry (Alvi, 2016). The study population comprised learners from two selected secondary schools: 18 scripts from grade 10 and 18 from grade 11 in the Sibasa Circuit, with half of the scripts from term 2 and the other half from term 4 in each grade. The schools were from different quintiles to improve analysis and contribute to the study. This subset was delineated based on parameters aligned with the objectives and scope of the research study, allowing the researcher to focus on segments of the population of particular interest or significance (Asiamah et al., 2017; Casteel & Bridier, 2021; Willie, 2022).

3.6.2 Sampling

Sampling is the process by which a researcher carefully selects, through probabilistic and non-probabilistic methods, several individual items from a larger population of interest for closer study. Sampling strategies should, whenever possible, identify inclusion and exclusion criteria to set boundaries on which items are selected and which are not from a given study population. To be fair and unbiased, and to give each item in each population an equal chance of being selected, most researchers use the scientific method of random sampling, which, for practical purposes, is idealistic and far-fetched.

© University of Venda

3.6.2.1 Judgmental/ purposive sampling

Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, is a nonprobability sampling technique in which researchers select participants based on specific characteristics or criteria (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). Here are some key considerations observed when adopting purposive sampling:

Targeted Selection: purposive sampling allowed the researcher to focus on specific characteristics or qualities relevant to the research questions. The selection criteria included learners within the Sibasa circuit, in the FET phase, sampled from grades 10 and 11, and representing three competency levels: higher, average, and low achievers.

Efficiency: purposive sampling is more efficient compared to random sampling, especially when studying a particular subgroup. Random sampling, being ideal for quantitative studies, purposive sampling, as a qualitative sampling technique, is efficient and provides depth of information

Depth of Information: purposive sampling enables the collection of rich, detailed data from participants with the most relevant experiences or knowledge. Questions on visual literacy, focusing on the interpretation of cartons, are part of the paper 1 language section for the grades 10 and 11 summative assessment tasks. Their interpretations of such questions were key to the current study, augmented by performance reports from teachers and curriculum advisors.

Flexibility also allows researchers to adjust the sample as new insights emerge during the study. For instance, questions about the plausibility of learners' inferences when decoding linguistic and non-linguistic signs provided further in-depth information on the reading and interpretation of cartoons, thereby expanding the themes and patterns for analysis.

3.7. Sample Size

Evans et al. (2000) and Lakens (2022) define sample size as the number of observations constituted in a study. The procedure for determining sample size in a qualitative study differs from that in quantitative research, as the former focuses more on the depth and richness of data rather than statistical representation. The following considerations were taken into account when determining sample size:

© University of Venda

3.7.1 Research purpose and questions

The aim of the study was to evaluate the plausibility of the inferences learners make when decoding linguistic and non-linguistic signs used in cartoons in selected formative assessment tasks. Subjective responses were anticipated to reveal learners' contextual experiences, challenges, and limitations. This process required an in-depth analysis of the data to identify themes and patterns.

3.7.2 Practical considerations

The researcher considered resource availability, such as time, budget, and access to participants, when determining sample size. This is a cross-sectional case study confined to a given locale, with timelines and factors to be considered. As such, a manageable sample size is inevitably mandatory.

3.7.3 Data saturation

This is often considered a key criterion when determining a sample size for a qualitative study. Data saturation occurs when no new information or themes are likely to emerge from the data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). To achieve this, the researcher familiarised herself with the data and purposively sampled learners' scripts, which were then analysed thematically. As stated in sections 1.5 and 1.6, research objectives and questions guided this process.

3.7.4 Methodological alignment

Being a qualitative study grounded in an exploratory design, the primary focus was to establish an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. In line with these considerations, a sample size of 18 respondents per grade was considered for the current study. The population comprised a diverse range of learners, with high (74%), middle (50%), and low-achieving (3%) competency levels, as per the National Curriculum Statement. The grade 10 respondents were from a different school than the grade 11 respondents.

© University of Venda

3.8. Data Collection

In a qualitative study of this nature, data collection often involves gathering non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences (Adedoyin, 2020). Non-numerical data for the current study consisted of students' responses to a given summative assessment task (see Appendix F). The questions generated worded responses that were key in understanding the correctness of inferences, the plausibility of inferences, and the everyday challenges learners encounter when decoding signs (linguistic and non-linguistic) as used on a given cartoon.

3.8.1 Data collection methods

The data collection method is a systematic approach used to gather information for research purposes (Taherdoost, 2021). As alluded to before, qualitative data collection aims to provide a deep understanding of the subject matter, often through rich, descriptive data. Commonly used qualitative data collection methods include interviews, focus groups, ethnography, and document analysis (Khan, Khalique, and Saini, 2025). For the purposes of this study, document analysis was adopted.

According to Morgan (2022), document analysis is a method for systematically reviewing and interpreting documents to gain insights into a particular topic or phenomenon. Therefore, for this study, the following steps were followed as composite features of document analysis:

3.8.1.1 Selection of Documents

The identified documents were learners' scripts for the term 2 and 4 summative assessment task. The study focused on question 4 of the mid-term and end-term exams, which assessed visual literacy.

3.8.1.2 Evaluation of Documents:

The question papers and scripts were official documents moderated, evaluated, and standardized. This process guarantees the requisite elements of authenticity, credibility, and relevance (Taibi & Ozolins, 2023).

© University of Venda

3.8.1.3 Content Analysis:

The content of the sampled documents was analysed through coding and thematic analysis, augmented by relevance theory, which is the theory underpinning the study.

Interpretation: The findings were analysed in relation to research questions and the theoretical framework for meaningful conclusions and insights

3.9. Data Analysis

According to Alem (2020), data analysis is the process of systematically examining, transforming, and modelling data to discover useful information, draw conclusions, and support decision-making. For the purpose of this study, the thematic data analysis method was used as explicated below:

1. Familiarization with Data: The researcher immersed herself in the data by reading and re-reading it. This provided an opportunity to note down initial ideas.

2. Generating Initial Codes: The researcher systematically coded interesting features of the data across the entire data set. This was done through labelling segments of data with codes that captured key concepts.

3. Searching for Themes: The researcher grouped the codes into potential themes and gathered all data relevant to each potential theme.

4. Reviewing Themes: This step involved checking whether the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set. Themes were further refined, with some merged.

5. Defining and Naming Themes: At this stage, the researcher defined themes and determined the essence of each theme. Concise and informative names were assigned to each theme.

6. Writing Up: This is the last stage of the thematic analysis process. It presents the final analysis. Illustrative quotes and examples were presented to augment a given theme or narrative.

© University of Venda

3.10. Ethical Considerations

The concepts and rules that researchers must follow to ensure their investigations are conducted honestly, decently, and with regard for the rights and welfare of participants and other affected parties are known as ethical considerations in research. Ethical consideration involves carefully examining moral principles and values when making decisions or conducting research. It involves ensuring informed consent, protecting confidentiality, minimizing harm, and treating individuals with fairness and respect (Mackey & Gass, 2015).

Ethical research designs follow guidelines to ensure that studies are conducted responsibly, protecting both the integrity of the research and the participants involved. Applicable ethical considerations for conducting a qualitative study are listed and briefly discussed below.

3.10.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is a process through which researchers obtain voluntary agreement from participants to partake in a study after providing comprehensive information about the study's objectives, procedures, risks, benefits, and their rights. It ensures that participants make informed decisions about their involvement (Hassan, 2024). This is one of the most important ethical considerations. Informed consent means that participants must be fully informed about the research, participate voluntarily, and be aware that they may withdraw from the study at any time. This study did not involve direct contact with participants; however, permission to use the assessed scripts was sought from teachers.

3.10.2 Confidentiality and privacy

This is crucial because the participants' identities and personal information should be protected; this includes not disclosing their names or any other identifying information in publications or presentations. Confidentiality refers to the ethical and legal duty to protect sensitive information from unauthorized disclosure. It is especially critical in sectors such as healthcare, law, and digital services, where trust is paramount (Ritunga et al., 2025). Privacy is the individual's right to control access to their personal data and to make

© University of Venda

informed decisions about how that data is collected, used, and shared (Chambers & Partners, 2025). Therefore, the identities and personal information of the participants in this study were kept private.

3.10.2 Harm

The researcher should consider the potential risks of the research, such as emotional distress, and the steps to be taken to minimise these risks. Therefore, the researcher should plan to provide support and resources to participants who experience harm as a result of the research. There was no harm to the participants in this study, as the researcher had no contact with them beyond their scripts. Ensuring their identity would not be revealed served to avoid any harm. The names of the schools were also not revealed for the same reasons.

3.10.3 Power and Privilege

This is another important ethical consideration, as researchers should be aware of their biases and how they may influence the research. One should be aware of the potentially exploitative relationship between researchers and participants and take steps to avoid such. In a nutshell, it is important to be aware that ethical issues may arise in research and to take steps to address them, ensuring one's research is conducted ethically and responsibly. The researcher avoided making biased judgments when analysing the scripts.

3.11. Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher has detailed procedures undertaken to address research objectives and questions. These included identification and elaboration of the research design, research approach, paradigm, population, sampling, data collection method and tool, and data collection and analysis. The last section of the chapter identified and explained ethical considerations applicable to the study.

© University of Venda

CHAPTER 4:

4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter follows the discussion of the research methodology and presents the study's findings, which aim to evaluate the plausibility of the inferences learners make when decoding linguistic and non-linguistic signs in cartoons on selected assessment tasks. This chapter presents an examination of the data gathered using the thematic analytical technique. Creswell (2014) states that there are three parts to qualitative data analysis: content analysis, thematic analysis, and comparative data analysis, which involves making comparisons. The study adopted a thematic analysis, which guided the researcher in identifying themes aligned with the objectives and research questions.

4.2 Presentation of findings

The discussion is organised around three research questions that collectively aim to evaluate the plausibility of the inferences learners make when decoding linguistic and non-linguistic signs in cartoons. Moreover, the findings are presented in line with the study's objectives, whereby the first objective is to evaluate learners' interpretation of verbal and non-verbal cues on selected cartoons, the second objective is to determine the plausibility of inferences learners make when decoding cartoons, and the third objective is to determine learners' challenges when decoding cartoons on selected assessments. The themes were generated from two purposively sampled groups of students in grades 10 and 11, representing three levels of performance: below average, average, and above average. For easier reference, participants were assigned codes to represent different grades and performance levels. For example, G10BL1 represents a grade 10, below-average-performing learner, whereas G11AL1 represents a grade 11, average-performing learner.

The participants' demographic profile is summarized below. The table summarised the participants' grades, genders, ages, and the number of attempts per grade.

© University of Venda

4.2. Demographic Details of the Participants (GRADE 10)

GRADE 10 PARTICIPANTS	Gender	Age	Number of years in Grade 10 (1st or 2nd attempt in the grade)
Learner 1- G10BL1	Female	19	2nd
Learner 2- G10BL2	Female	16	1st
Learner 3-G10 BL3	Male	17	2nd
Learner 4-G10AL1	Female	16	1st
Learner 5- G10AL2	Male	16	1st
Learner 6-G10AL3	Female	16	1st
Learner 7- G10AAL 1	Female	16	1st
Learner 8- G10AAL2	Female	16	1st
Learner 9- G10AAL3	Female	16	1st

Table 1

The table shows that the majority of participants were aged 16, with 7 in this category. Interestingly, all participants under this category were attempting grade 10 for the first time. The table also shows 1 participant at 17 repeating the grade for the second time, while the last participant, aged 19, was also attempting the grade for the 2nd time. There were 2 males, accounting for 22.2%, and 7 females, accounting for 77.8%, among participants in grade 10. This information indicates a trend of more females than males in most schools. This composition makes it interesting to examine whether there is a causal relationship between gender category and the interpretative qualities of grade 10 participants. Six (6) participants, constituting 66.7%, were attempting grade 10 for the first time. Similarly, 2 participants (22.2%) were attempting grade 10 for the second time. It will also be interesting to see whether the number of attempts is significant for participants' interpretations of cartoon questions.

© University of Venda

4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF THE PARTICIPANTS (GRADE 11)

The demographic details for sampled Grade 11 learners in this study included gender, age, and number of years in a grade of study (Grade 11). The table below shows the demographic details per grade category.

GRADE 11 PARTICIPANTS	**Gender**	**Age**	Number of years in Grade 11 (1st or 2nd attempt in the grade)
Learner 1-G11BL1	Female	18	2nd
Learner 2- G11BL2	Male	18	2nd
Learner 3- G11BL3	Female	17	1st
Learner 4- G11AL1	Female	18	2nd
Learner 5- G11AL2	Male	17	1st
Learner 6- G11AL3	Male	17	1st
Learner 7- G11AAL1	Female	17	1st
Learners 8- G11AAL2	Male	18	2nd
Learner 9- G11AAL3	Female	18	2nd

Table 2:

The demographic details for sampled Grade 11 learners in this study also included gender, age, and number of years in a grade of study (Grade 11). The table (2) above shows the number of participants who were in Grade 11. Of the 9 participants, 5 were females, with 3 aged 18 and 2 aged 17, and 4 were males, with 2 aged 18 and the other 2 aged 17. All participants aged 18 were attempting the grade for the second time, while all participants aged 17 were attempting the grade for the first time. There were five (5) male and six (6) female participants. This composition pattern also makes it interesting to note whether there is a causal relationship between gender category and the interpretative qualities of grade 11 participants. Four (4) participants (44.4%) were attempting grade 10 for the first time. Similarly, 5 participants (55.6%) were attempting

© University of Venda

grade 10 for the second time. It will also be interesting to see whether the number of attempts is significant for participants' interpretations of cartoon questions.

4.4 Data Presentation

Data collected is presented in relation to the study's objectives and research questions. In line with the thematic data representation, the researcher had to be immersed to make sense of learners' responses to the adopted data collection tool. See Appendix D, a tool used to generate participants' responses.

The objectives that underpinned the study are:

Objective 1: To evaluate learners' interpretation of verbal and non-verbal cues on selected cartoons.

Objective 2: To determine the plausibility of inferences learners make when decoding cartoons on selected formative assessment tasks.

Objective 3: To determine learners' challenges when decoding cartoons on selected formative assessment tasks.

The following are the research questions that guided the study and are aligned with the research objectives that are stated above:

1. **Research Question 1**

To what extent are learners able to make sense of cartoons' verbal and non-verbal cues on selected formative assessments?

2. **Research Question 2**

How plausible are the inferences learners make when interpreting cartoons?

3. **Research Question 2**

What challenges do learners encounter when interpreting cartoons on selected formative assessment tasks?

© University of Venda

The findings for each research objective and question are presented in more detail in the following sections.

4.1.1 DATA PRESENTATION PER OBJECTIVE

Objective 1: To evaluate learners' interpretation of verbal and non-verbal cues on selected cartoons.

Research Question 1: To what extent are learners able to make sense of cartoons' verbal and non-verbal cues on selected formative assessments?

Objective 1 intended to evaluate the interpretation of verbal and non-verbal cues by selected learners from selected schools in the Sibasa circuit, Vhembe District. Participants' responses to the identified questions were evaluated in relation to the research question. The following are the major themes identified from participants' responses:

Theme 1: Misinterpretation of verbal cues and non-verbal cues

Theme 2: Unintelligible expressions

Theme 3: Misinterpretation of gestures

Theme 4: Interpreting non-verbal cues through comparative statements

The above themes are explicated respectively with supporting excerpts.

© University of Venda

Theme 1: Misinterpretation of verbal cues and non-verbal cues

Interpretation of verbal and nonverbal cues in the context of the study may entail a number of interpretative activities: decoding facial expressions, making sense of gestures in context, interpreting register and diction, accounting for omission and or exclusion, explaining the rationale for spatial arrangement of text items, and the positioning of text in the frame.

Excerpt G11BL1, in an attempt to interpret verbal cues used in the frame (the use of ellipsis) (see Appendix C), stated that:

G11BL1 *to make the readers happy and know about the cartoonist*

In this context, ellipses were conveying an incomplete thought. In some instances, it can be used to indicate an intentional pause, keeping the conversation between characters discreet and subtle. But in this case, the respondent's interpretation of ellipsis as linguistic items intended to evoke readers' happiness is incorrect.

Similarly, respondent G10BL3, in an effort to make sense of non-verbal cues as used in the text (see Appendix B), contended that the evidence for the character's total concentration in the text is:

G10BL3: *is to go library*

The response could either be categorised as invalid or incongruent; hence, it can be categorised as a misinterpretation of verbal cues in the context of the text. Items that can be used to show concentration in cartoons include postures, eye contact, and the type of exchange between two characters.

Misinterpretations of this nature were also noted in the respondents G10BL1 and G10L2:

G10BL1: *Afrikaans 'JON JON! HER'S what you do*

G10L2: *English*

In an attempt to comprehend and interpret the non-verbal cues, as in the text (see Appendix E), i.e., the character's raising of hands after finding a tree on the car could

© University of Venda

indicate shock or frustration. Non-verbal cues such as these require the respondent to link the body gestures to the text's context. The responses above can be categorised as misinterpretation of verbal cues, as they are out of context with regard to the non-verbal cues displayed in the frames.

Theme 2: Unintelligible expressions

Intelligible expressions are written, spoken, or signed forms of communication that are easy for the intended audience to understand, clear, and coherent. Such expressions should be organised logically and effectively communicate meaning, ensuring the intended meaning is understood.

Excerpt G10BL3, in an attempt to express how words are emphasised by mentioning the techniques used (see Appendix B), stated that:

> G10BL3: *They Hobb's is tark so much*
>
> G10BL1: *FRAME 3 and 4*
>
> G10BL2: *Possibly Quiet*

The responses above show that most average performers and almost all below-average participants had difficulty understanding what was expected of them when answering questions about the verbal clues. However, learners who were performing above average, although not entirely accurate, had an idea of what was expected of them; hence, their answers were not far off from the expected answers. There were also a notable number of respondents who provided responses that were either incorrect (G10BL1), irrelevant (G10BL2), unintelligible (G10BL3), or vague due to a lack of intelligible meaning.

© University of Venda

Theme 3: Misinterpretation of gestures

Gestures are non-verbal, movements of the hands, arms, or body that express emotions, emphasise speech, or convey meanings. Context is therefore necessary for accurate interpretation, because the same gesture can vary across cultures.

As shown in Appendix B, Question 4.1, which reads “What evidence from the frames indicates Hobb’s total concentration in the book? This question aims to evaluate how learners interpret the verbal cues. The excerpts shown below ranged from incorrect responses to acceptable responses.

G10BL2: *The tiger and the boy*

The response above shows that some participants have difficulty interpreting and comprehending the character's (Hobbs's) gestures.

G10AAL2: *Because calvin is trying to talk to him but he is not responding*

G10AAL3: *Because Hobbs is concentrating on the book and not listening.*

Moreover, some responses indicate that learners, especially those performing below average, struggle to grasp and interpret what the question expects of them. However, most learners whose performance ranges from average to above average have demonstrated comprehension of the character's gestures and correctly interpreted the intended cues.

From question 4.1.2, which reads, “Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence. Write down ONLY the question number (4.1.2) and the letter (A-D) of the correct answer.”

Hobbs’ facial expression in frame 2 indicates that he finds Calvin’s questions…

A interesting

B inquisitive

C annoying

D pleasant

© University of Venda

The following were the responses provided by the respondents:

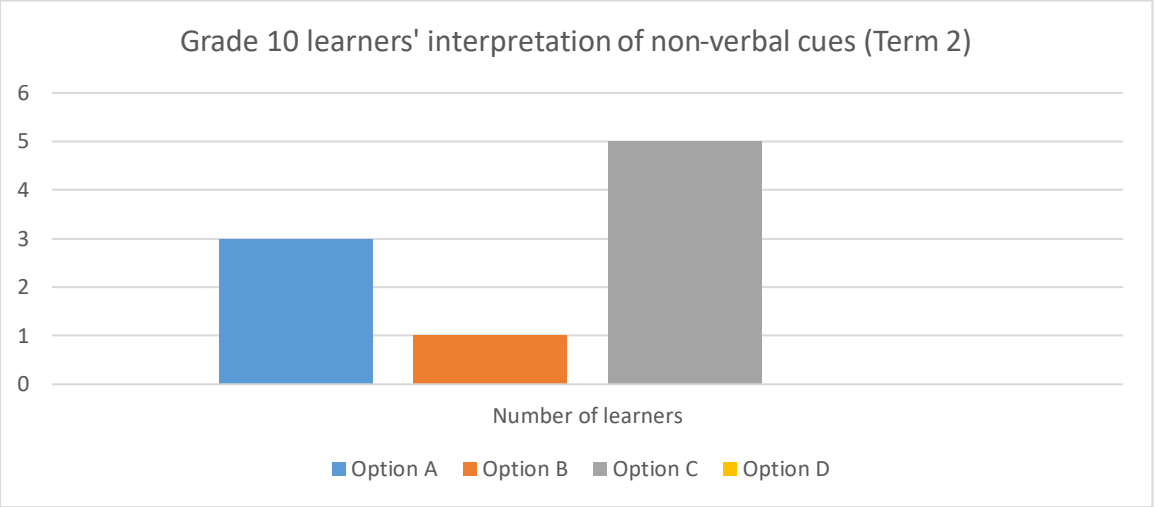


Figure 2: Grade 10 learners' interpretation of non-verbal cues (Term 2)

The graph above shows the participants' responses, with most choosing option C as the correct answer. Five learners (55%) out of the nine chose option C, three (33%) learners chose option A, while only one (12%) learner chose option B. The expected answer, however, is option C, which requires learners to look at the facial expression of Hobb's and infer what it could have meant. The responses indicate that most participants understood and correctly interpreted this type of non-verbal cue.

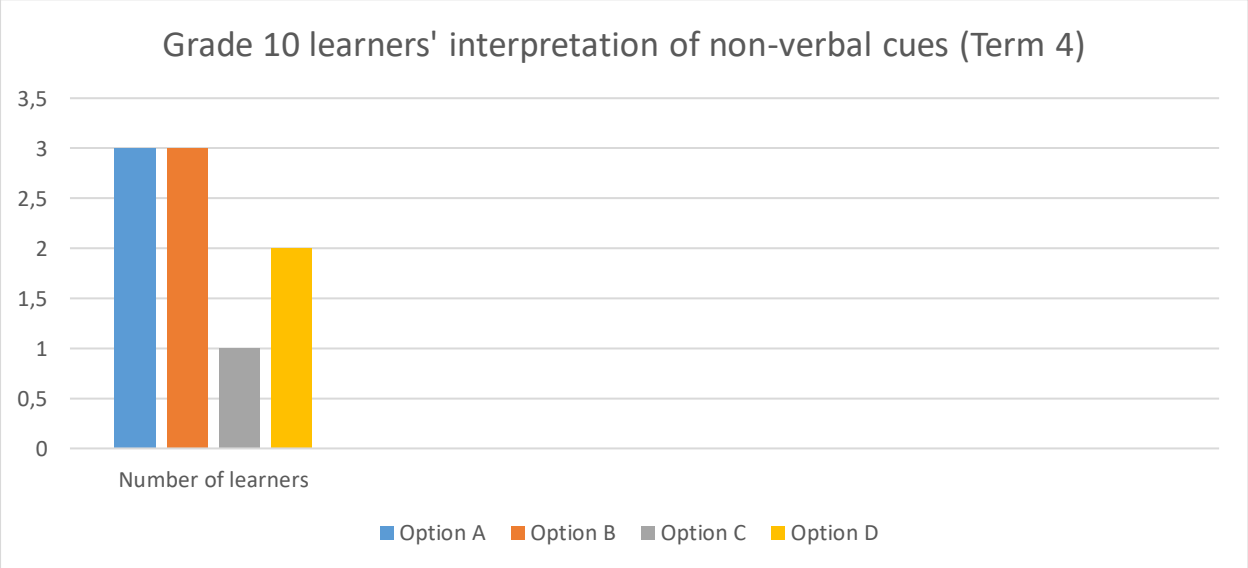


Figure 3: Grade 10 learners' interpretation of non-verbal cues (Term 4)

© University of Venda

The graph above shows that the majority of learners chose both options A and B. Only two learners chose option D, which is the expected answer in this case. This then shows that learners have difficulties with interpreting facial expressions and body language, which are also vital in making inferences

From question 4.1.2, in Appendix C, which reads, “Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence: Calvin feels… about completing his writing task

A. Excited

B. Happy

C. Frustrated

D. Emotional

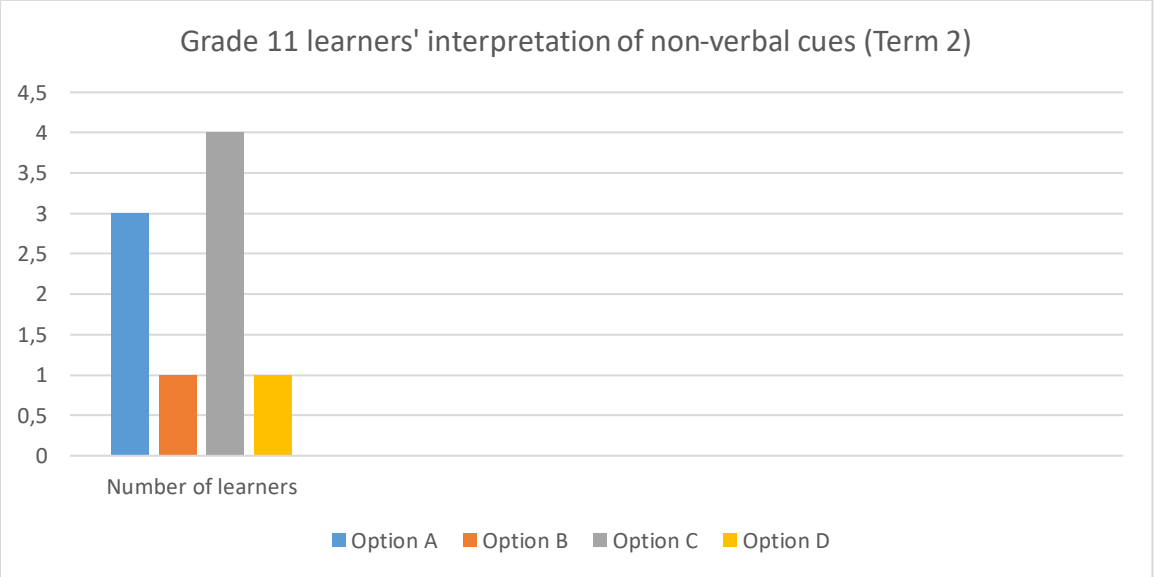


Figure 4: Grade 11 learners’ interpretation of non-verbal cues (Term 2)

The graph above shows that most learners have chosen option C as the correct answer, while some have chosen all the other options. The majority of the learners have chosen the incorrect option. This shows that most learners have difficulties interpreting the non-verbal clues.

© University of Venda

Furthermore, from question 4.2.1 (Appendix E), which reads, “Write what the lines above Garfield’s fingers suggest.” Some of the learners' answers reveal that most of them face challenges in interpreting and making meaning of communicative gestures. The responses have also shown little to no comprehension of the question and what is expected of them.

G11BL1: *A Tree just fell on my car*

G11BL2: *It shown Jon what he is talking about*

G11BL3: *Jon! Jon! Here’s what you do*

G11AL1: *they want to explain but Jon will not want to her that*

G11AL2: *He think like did this knowingly*

Although the above responses show little to no comprehension of communicative gestures, the following responses show some comprehension of the question but difficulties with providing sensible responses.

G11AL3: *That finger mean is touching someone*

G11AAL1: *He is trying to make Jon look at him and make him listen to him*

G11AAL2: *Tapping someone to get their attention*

G11AAL3: *That he pintched or touched Jon*

Theme 4: Interpreting non-verbal cues through comparative statements

Question 4.3.2, in Appendix D, aimed to determine respondents' ability to make meaningful comparisons displayed by cartoon characters in different frames. Responses varied, indicating varying levels of competence, ranging from responses that did not mark any comparison, as in the excerpts G11BL1 and G11BL2, which respectively started with an affirmative response, 'yes,' and an argumentative register, which were not appropriate in the context of the text.

G11BL1: *Yes because they took very well they help one another*

© University of Venda

G11BL2: *Because they are teaching other to make some work at school*

There were also responses that merely offered descriptive statements of respondents' subjective interpretations of the cartoons in the frames. G11AL1, G11AL2, and G11A13 merely offered that the character is not happy, is emotional, and disappointed, respectively.

G11BL3: *IF you ask me These Assignments Don't teach Teach you How To write, They Teach you How to Hate to write*

G11AL1: *He was not happy he tired about school assignments*

G11AL2: *Emotional she was touched about calvin story that is why she says every time I do that I end up in the school psychologists office*

G11AL3: *Disappointed in calvin for not enjoying school*

G11AAL1: *his eyes are wise open*

Responses from G11AAL2 and G11AAL3 provided comparative descriptions of characters in the frames. Descriptive adjectives that explained what was actually happening in the frames were used by respondents. These included, among others, "felt good;" "felt awkward." As in G11AAL2 and smiling as in G11AAL3.

G11AAL2: *He thought he was giving a good advice and felt good about it, but as calvin shows that he has done it and always ends up in the psychologist's office he felt awkward about his advice*

G11AAL3: *In Frame 3 Hobbes is giving advice to Calvin and is serious while In Frame 4 he is smiling, playing around*

The next section presents themes generated in line with research objective 2, aligned with question 2:

Objective 2: To determine the plausibility of inferences learners make when decoding cartoons on selected formative assessment tasks.

© University of Venda

Research Question 2: How plausible are the inferences learners make when interpreting cartoons?

Objective 2 was intended to determine whether Grade 10 and 11 learners within Sibasa Circuit could make plausible inferences when decoding cartoons. Plausible inferences are to be backed up by valid, logical, and rational evidence to make a claim or proposition authoritative.

To address this objective, relevant questions from the formal tasks (Appendices B, C, D, and E) were identified. Participants' responses to the identified questions were determined in relation to the research question. Below are the major themes identified from participants' responses:

Theme 5: Implausible inferences

Plausible inferences are logical conclusions that are reasonable, credible, and not necessarily conclusive (Davis, n.d)

From question 4.3.3, respondents were expected to explain the humour in the cartoon, and below were the answers provided:

> G10BL1: *FRAME 2*
>
> G10BL2: *The boys and Tiger*
>
> G10BL3: *They was see a book to calvin Hobbs tark to go LiBrary*
>
> G10AL1: *It it exciting*
>
> G10AAL1: *Calvin do not knowe the importance of books.*
>
> G10AAL2: *calvin is not understanding that when you read a book you read it quietly*
>
> G10AAL3: *The humour is exciting.*

The responses above show that most participants struggled to understand the question. The responses ranged from incorrect expression, as in extract G10BL3, to incorrect

© University of Venda

responses that were offered out of context. Some of the responses were simply personal reflections, with G10AAL3 saying, "The humor is exciting."

Theme 6: Vague inferences

A vague expression is one that is difficult to understand because it is unclear, imprecise, or lacks specific details.

From question 4.4, respondents were expected to describe how Calvin's actions in FRAME 7 contrast with his actions in FRAME 8. The following answers were provided:

G10BL1: *Calvin said ooh he's gonna hate me for This.*

G10BL2: *Its showing I can make*

G10AL2: *When the snow hits him*

- *when his running*

G10AL3: *His eyes are fully opened.*

The question required learners to compare and describe certain actions in the cartoon. This question also required learners to make inferences by linking the actions described in frame 7 to those in frame 8. Most learners, however, seem to have had challenges with answering this question. Some learners did not provide answers to this question, possibly because they struggled to understand it.

Theme 7: Propositions with no substantiation

Propositions are statements or assertions that express a judgment or opinion, while substantiations are acts of validating, finding, or testing the truth of something (Pappas, 2024).

From question 4.6, respondents were expected to affirm or negate a character's behaviour and also provide substantiations for their responses. The following were some of the responses provided:

G10BL1: *Yes I think hobbes behaviour is acceptable in this cartoon*

G10BL2: *Yes Because is Well list Haye some showing*

© University of Venda

G10AL1: *No because he was not showed in this cartoon*

G10AL2: *Yes because there just friends who are playing*

Responses varied from overt answers that lack substantiation, as in extract G10BL1, which simply stated that the behaviour is acceptable. Responses ranged from incongruent, unintelligible responses to incomplete or non-existent responses. However, few responded accurately, with substantiation that was contextually appropriate, indicating respondents' heightened level of argumentation and inferential repertoire.

Furthermore, responses to inferences that also required respondents' subjective interpretations, with supportive justification, elicited varied responses. The question, which read: "Do you think Calvin's attitude towards his schoolwork is justified? Substantiate your answer." (See appendix D), allowed respondents to take their position either in agreement or not in agreement, followed by a justifiable substantiation.

Notable responses included a proposition in affirmation (yes) but followed by an implausible substantiation as in G11BL1

G11BL1: *Yes because psychologist office help him*.

G11BL3: *Yes Because he hate to write school work*

Responses with a negative affirmative (No) with substantiation also varied, with G11BL2 registering a proposition but supported by a vague substantiation, registering a lack of understanding of the word justified.

G11BL2: *No hi cant justified hi with attitude*

Subsequent responses varied, ranging from congruent responses that adequately substantiated the claim (as in G11AL1, G11AL3, and G11AA2).

The last set of themes was aligned to objective three and research question 3 as indicated below.

Objective 3: To determine learners' challenges when decoding cartoons on selected formative assessment tasks

© University of Venda

Research Question 3: What challenges do learners encounter when interpreting cartoons on selected formative assessment tasks?

Objective 3 was intended to determine the challenges the selected Grade 10 and 11 learners in the Sibasa Circuit face when decoding cartoons. To address this objective, relevant questions from the formal tasks (Appendices B, C, D, and E) were identified. Participants' responses to the identified questions were determined in relation to the research question. Below are the major themes identified from participants' responses:

Theme 8: Non-response to questions

Responding to questions allows one to express themselves and for the hearer to understand what is being said. Therefore, responses promote clear communication.

The excerpts also show a pattern of non-response among some participants. For instance, four participants did not attempt to answer certain questions, suggesting that when participants are unable to understand and infer meaning from visual texts, they may not respond at all. Notably, a similar pattern is evident in G10BL3, who left two questions unanswered. This applied to G10AL3 and G10AAL3, who left 1 question unanswered. In essence, this translates to 33.3% of grade 10 learners who left questions unanswered. The remaining 66.7% gave responses, although not all were correct.

Theme 9: Incomprehensible responses.

Some participants' responses were not comprehensible. In a question asking respondents to provide evidence that a character is entirely focused on a book (see Appendix B), some excerpts show incomprehensible responses.

G10BL3: *to go library*

Similarly, when asked to provide communication techniques used to emphasize what a character is saying, question 4.3.1 in the same appendix, G10BL3, still provided an incomprehensible response.

G10BL3: *They Hobbs is tark so much*

© University of Venda

More incomprehensible responses were noted in question 4.4 (see Appendix C), where respondents were required to describe a character's actions in one frame in contrast to actions in another frame.

G10BL3: *Its showing I can make*

Most learners seem to grasp and understand what the question requires of them. However, some learners have difficulty clearly expressing their answers in relation to the cartoon.

Theme 10: Irrelevant responses

From question 4.1.1, respondents were expected (see Appendix E) to describe a character's body language; the following responses were provided

G11BL1: *Afrikaans*

JON JON! HER'S what you do

G11BL2: *English*

The responses above have shown that learners performing at the below-average level have provided responses that are irrelevant to either the question or the provided cartoon text

Other notable responses attempt to provide relevant responses; however, they show difficulties in providing plausible ones.

G11AL2: *Jon is being shocked about what happen on his car*

G11AAL1: *It is happy and excited*

G11AAL2: *In disbelief, desperate*

Furthermore, the responses above show that most learners struggle to provide relevant responses, while some seem to understand what is expected of them and therefore provide responses that are not far off from the expected ones.

Theme 11: Restatement of the question in place of an answer

© University of Venda

Question 4.6 in Appendix E, “Do you think Hobbes’ behaviour is acceptable in this cartoon? Substantiate your answer,” shows that some learners simply restate the question as their substantiation. They simply affirm and then restate the question:

G10BL1: *Yes I think hobbes behaviour is acceptable in this cartoon*

© University of Venda

CHAPTER 5

5. INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the study's findings, which aimed to explore the interpretative repertoire of cartoons by selected Grade 10 & 11 learners in the Sibasa Circuit. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the data, summarise the key findings presented in Chapter 4, and discuss their implications in relation to the research questions. It also seeks to establish comparability to existing literature and the theoretical framework that underpinned the study.

5.2. DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it. Subjective or social meanings can be referred to as "meaning making." Analysis of qualitative data could also be used to discover and describe issues in the field or structures and processes in routines and practices (Mezmir, 2020).

Qualitative data analysis frequently blends methods of a detailed analysis (elaboration of categories, hermeneutic interpretations, or identified structures) with methods of a rough analysis of the content (overviews, condensation, summaries). The final aim is often to arrive at generalizable statements by comparing various materials, texts, or cases (Bryman, 2001; Mezmir, 2020).

5.3. Discussions of Findings

This section discusses the study's findings on the key themes derived from the analysed data. As detailed in the previous chapter, the key themes that were outlined in line with objective number 1 are:

Theme 1: misinterpretation of Verbal and non-verbal cues

Theme 2: Unintelligible expressions

Theme 3: Interpretation of gestures (body language)

© University of Venda

Theme 4: Interpreting non-verbal cues through comparative statements

Theme 5: Implausible inferences

Theme 6: Vague interpretation

Theme 7: Propositions with no substantiation

Theme 8: Non response

Theme 9: Incomprehensible responses

Theme 10: Irrelevant responses

Theme 11: Restatement of the question in place of an answer

These themes are discussed in detail, highlighting inferences to help understand participants' challenges in interpreting cartoons, in line with the study objectives. The themes are grouped under each objective according to relevance. The themes are discussed with reference to the literature review and the theoretical framework of this study.

5.3.1. INTERPRETATION OF VERBAL CUES AND NON-VERBAL CUES

The first key theme that emerged from the findings was the misinterpretation of the cartoon's verbal cues. This theme focused on the participants' ability to understand the meaning of the texts alone, which is in line with the first objective, "to evaluate learners' interpretation of verbal and non-verbal cues on selected cartoons.

The findings revealed that 6 of 9 learners (66.6%) in the Grade 10 mid-year struggled with Question 4.3.1 (see Appendix B). However, a few learners demonstrated an understanding of the question and attempted responses that were either correct or closely aligned with the expected answer.

The responses to Question 4.2.1 (Appendix C) show that most Grade 11 learners struggled to understand what was expected of them regarding the use of ellipsis in the mid-year assessment. The majority of respondents seemed unfamiliar with what ellipses

© University of Venda

are and how they are used. Only 3 out of 9 learners (33.3%) demonstrated a clear understanding of ellipsis.

In question 4.1.1 Term 4 (see Appendix D), respondents were expected to describe a character's body language. The findings show that most learners responded appropriately, with 6 of 9 (66.6%) providing acceptable responses.

From question 4.2.1 (see Appendix E), only 4 out of 9 (44.4%) learners provided correct responses to expressing body language and gestures, and what they could mean.

Research on multimodal elements in cartoons shows that cartoon messages are not always easy to understand, requiring readers to observe both linguistic (verbal) and visual (non-verbal) information to grasp implied meaning. This reiterates the findings that readers often struggle to integrate text and visual cues when interpreting cartoon messages (Abdullah et al., 2020)

Similarly, these findings corroborate a study by Alruthaya et al. (2025), which examined multimodal text complexity using eye-tracking and found that young readers experienced unexpected comprehension challenges, especially on pages where verbal text and visual cues were inconsistent. Misalignment between written and visual information was identified as the main determinant of interpretive difficulty and confusion (Alruthaya et al., 2025).

With reference to relevance theory, it claims that the key element in human communication is the recognition of the speaker's intentions, which are guided by ordinary cognitive inferential processes, and that communication also involves interpreting contextual cues and using them as evidence for inferring the speaker's intentions. Interestingly, participants in the current study reported challenges interpreting the communicative cues in the cartoon texts. Inability to make sense of inferential cues in each context may contribute to miscommunication between interlocutors.

© University of Venda

5.3.2 INTERPRETATION OF NON-VERBAL CUES

The second key theme that emerged from the findings was the misinterpretation of the nonverbal cues given in a cartoon. This theme focused on the participants' ability to understand the meaning of the gestures and body language.

In the grade 10 learners' mid-year summative assessment (Appendix B), it has been observed that, for question 4.1.1, 5 out of 9 (55.5%) learners seem to understand what is expected of them, and their responses show some understanding of the question. However, learners who are below average seem to have difficulty understanding what the question requires of them. Furthermore, in question 4.1.2, where learners were expected to choose the correct option for interpreting facial expressions, 5 out of 9 learners (55.5%) chose the correct option.

In question 4.2 (Appendix C), where learners were required to choose the correct option, only 2 out of 9 (22.2%) learners chose it. This then shows that most learners had challenges with interpreting and understanding facial expressions in this cartoon. The same number of responses were observed in question 4.4, where only 2 learners got the answers correct.

In question 4.1.2 (Appendix D), learners were expected to provide an answer based on feelings and emotions, and they were expected to choose the correct option from the provided. However, only 4 of 9 (44.4%) chose the correct options.

From question 4.3.2 (Appendix E), only 1 out of 9 (11.1%) learners provided an answer close to the expected answer. This shows that learners indeed have challenges with analysing and interpreting facial expressions.

Wilson (2019) states that in nonverbal communication, ostensive stimuli often augment prior linguistic cues, facilitating the audience's recognition of the communicator's intentions. However, in certain instances, the behaviour exhibited provides indirect evidence, necessitating the audience's inferential process to derive the intended meaning based on the presumption of contextual relevance. Although there is no distinct, identifiable layer of information for the listener to extract directly, utterances still carry

© University of Venda

meanings. This is possible because they encode logical forms (conceptual representations, even if incomplete or partial), which the speaker intentionally provides as input for the inferential comprehension process.

A study by Abekah et al. (2024) found that misinterpretation of body language, facial expressions, and gestures significantly impacts students' perceptions of the quality of their instruction, with age and gender moderating this effect. This supports the idea that learners' inability to interpret non-verbal cues may directly impact their understanding and engagement.

In the same vein, a cross-cultural study by Pang, Zhou, and Chu (2024) examined how individuals from different cultural backgrounds interpret **non-verbal cues** during indirect communication. The findings showed that **British participants frequently misinterpreted non-verbal cues** from Chinese speakers and were unable to accurately identify indirect replies above chance level. This demonstrates that non-verbal cues—such as facial expressions, posture, and gestures—can be **misread**, especially when interpreted outside one's cultural framework. This adds to the understanding that cognition and perception are often influenced by social and cultural orientation. As such, it is important to read beyond culture so that one may understand the subtle non-linguistic cues that are often part of non-verbal communication in cartoons.

Concurring with this, Carmichael et al. (2023) demonstrate the importance of body language, vocal intonation, and facial expressions in communicating comprehension and responsiveness. Therefore, showing that students who accurately read facial expressions show greater comprehension. Similarly, a study by Pang et al. (2024) demonstrated that misreading nonverbal cues can hinder comprehension, particularly in cross-cultural settings, consistent with the finding that learners who performed below average had difficulty accurately interpreting facial expressions and gestures, and that context is crucial for interpreting nonverbal cues. Although cultural differences occasionally caused learners to misinterpret cues, participants generally showed a strong ability to infer meaning from non-verbal behaviors, implying that students might be more adept at deciphering nonverbal clues than your Grade 10 sample suggested, particularly when given context.

© University of Venda

It was further discovered that students' opinions of the quality of instruction were significantly influenced by nonverbal communication, and most students were proficient at deciphering cues (Abekah et.al, 2024). This study highlights the general efficacy of non-verbal cues in improving understanding, which contrasts with the current findings that learners who performed below average had challenges.

5.3.3 UNITELLIGIBLE EXPRESSIONS

The third key theme that emerged from the findings was the interpretation of the cartoon's verbal cues. This theme focused on the participants' ability to make intelligible expressions when interpreting both verbal and non-verbal cues in cartoon questions.

When dealing with questions under this theme, in question 4.3.1 (see Appendix B), 3 out of 9 (33.3%) of the grade 10 respondents provided unintelligible responses, while in question 4.1.1, 1 out of 9 (11.1%) of the respondents provided unintelligible responses.

Similarly, in question 4.4 (see appendix C), 1 out of 9 (11.1%) respondents also provided unintelligible responses, and a further 1 out of 9 in question 4.3 1 also provided similar responses. Furthermore, responses of such nature were observed in the grade 11 responses to question 4.4 (see Appendix D), whereby 1 out of 9 (11.1%) respondents also provided such expressions

A study conducted by Stemele and Jina Asvat (2024) found that, due to misconceptions and conceptual confusion, Grade 9 students frequently produced algebraic expressions that were unclear or incorrect, corroborating the current findings by demonstrating that incomprehensible answers are not the result of careless errors but rather of deeper misunderstandings. Additionally, Moru et al. (2022) found that students' reliance on repetitive learning and insufficient thought processes were frequent causes of their incomprehensible written expressions, thereby linking incomprehensible answers to gaps in conceptual development and reasoning.

Similarly, Spicciarelli et al. (2025) demonstrated that children's verbal working memory was disrupted by classroom speech noise, leading to ambiguous or incomprehensible

© University of Venda

verbal responses and attributing incomprehensibility to environmental distractions and cognitive overload.

However, Englehardt et al. (2010) found that unintelligible or fragmented expressions in learners' speech often represent transitional stages in language development, during which meaning is still being formed, suggesting that unintelligible responses can be part of normal developmental progression rather than purely errors. Concurring with this, a study by Wang (2024) found that what educators consider "unintelligible" may make sense within the linguistic or cultural frameworks of their students, and that misinterpretation may result from a mismatch between learner discourse styles and teacher expectations. Unintelligible responses, therefore, might be the result of cultural differences rather than deficiencies in cognition or comprehension.

5.3.4 ANALYSIS OF LEARNERS' INFERENCES

The fourth key theme that emerged from the findings was the interpretation of the cartoon's verbal cues. This theme focused on participants' ability to infer from the situations and moods in the cartoon.

From question 4.3.2 (Appendix B), it has been observed that 1 out of 9 (11.1%) learners have had challenges with answering this question. However, other learners seem to have somewhat understood the question, though their answers are not spot-on and are just one word, when they were expected to elaborate and discuss.

From question 4.3.3 (Appendix C), 9 out of 9 (100%) learners struggle to understand the question, resulting in incorrect responses. The responses learners gave to question 4.6 show that more than half were acceptable. 5 out of 9 (55%) learners gave the correct answers.

From question 4.4 (Appendix D), in which learners were expected to infer meaning from a character's attitude in a cartoon question, most learners demonstrated understanding of the question and responded closely to the expected response. 7 out of 9 (77.7%) learners provided satisfactory answers.

© University of Venda

Learners were expected to infer sudden changes in a character's facial expression in the cartoon (Appendix E); however, only 4 out of 9 (44.4%) made correct inferences about the cartoon characters and their behaviours.

Relevance Theory suggests that much communication involves inference and that when a speaker says something, the listener not only takes the words at face value but also uses context, background knowledge, and assumptions to infer the speaker's intended meaning. Allott (2013) states that he process of inference in Relevance Theory occurs when a listener derives meaning from an utterance by filling in gaps in the communicated message, and that when people communicate, they choose to convey information that they expect their audience to find relevant. Therefore, this principle assumes that speakers provide cues to guide the listener toward the most relevant interpretations of the message. Moreover, a study conducted by Gurlitt and Renkl (2010) found that students made better inferences about a text based on prior knowledge, as this allows them to connect to the intended learning text. A study by Schieble (2011) further supports this by elaborating on the importance of prior knowledge in interpreting graphics and visual texts.

A study by Rice et al. (2024) found that inferencing is a difficult yet necessary skill in reading comprehension. Although inconsistent definitions affect assessment, inferential instruction enhances students' comprehension of texts. Therefore, supporting that understanding meaning beyond explicit cues depends heavily on students' capacity for inference.

Furthermore, it has been found that, depending on their inferential reading abilities, high school students' comprehension profiles differ considerably. Higher overall comprehension was associated with strong inference-making. Therefore, showing that inference analysis is a crucial differentiator in learner performance (Nadalini et al., 2025).

Rice et al. (2024) also emphasised that different definitions of "inference" across courses and tests lead to inaccurate assessments of students' abilities. Simply because the assessment criteria are unclear, some students may appear to have trouble drawing conclusions. Therefore, demonstrating how inference analysis can be faulty or deceptive

© University of Venda

based on its definition and testing. They also discovered that although comprehension and inference skills were related, many students relied mainly on surface-level cues rather than on more complex inferential reasoning. As a result, their actual inferential capacity was overestimated, suggesting that learners may not be consistently applying inference skills

5.3.5 NO RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION

The excerpts also show a pattern of non-response among some participants. For instance, four participants did not attempt to answer certain questions, suggesting that when participants are unable to understand and infer meaning from visual texts, they may not respond at all. Notably, a similar pattern is evident in G10BL3, who left two questions unanswered. This applied to G10AL3 and G10AAL3, who left 1 question unanswered. In essence, this translates to 33.3% of learners leaving questions unanswered. The remaining 66.7% gave responses, although not all were correct.

A study conducted by Alomair (2023) found that students' reliance on nonverbal cues or hesitation due to unclear instructions is often reflected in their silence or lack of verbal response. Confirming that students' failure to respond may indicate difficulty understanding the questions. Khuman (2024) further highlighted that when learners experience cognitive overload or verbal instructions that are inadequate, silence and lack of response frequently result, therefore connecting "no response" to learner processing capacity and instructional clarity

Challenging the above, Zidane & Zerrouki (2025) discovered that silence is more than just disengagement; it can also signify introspection, deference, or attentive listening, and that silence can be a purposeful communication strategy in certain situations. They further demonstrate that "no response" can signify careful consideration rather than confusion, and that silence is regarded as a sign of agreement, thoughtfulness, or politeness in some cultural contexts. To demonstrate respect, students may deliberately remain quiet, suggesting that "no response" might not always be a sign of trouble; it could also be a culturally acceptable response.

© University of Venda

CHAPTER 6

6. SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, key findings, and recommendations drawn from the themes discussed in the previous chapter. The research focused on Grade 10 and 11 learners' mid-year and end-of-year assessments, with specific attention given to Question 4 of Paper 1, which assesses learners' ability to analyse cartoons. The chapter outlines the study's core findings by highlighting the key aspects identified from learners' responses. Based on these findings, the chapter provides recommendations to improve learners' cartoon analysis skills and strengthen assessment performance. These recommendations are intended to contribute meaningful guidance for future teaching practices, curriculum planning, and decision-making processes.

6.2.2 Summary of Key Findings

Through thematic analysis of the collected data, the study's key findings indicate that participants struggled with elements essential to comprehension, interpretation, and inference in cartoon questions. The study revealed that participants struggled and had the following challenges:

6.2.1 The problem of poor comprehension is key since it was fundamental in prohibiting respondents from making correct interpretations. Poor comprehension of a text can often be attributed to a range of factors. In written texts, factors such as poor vocabulary and difficulty in making sense of foreign concepts in a text often limit the textual comprehension (written text). But with non-linguistic texts, which do not use written words, it is important that readers understand meaning through signs such as visual, gestural, or spatial ones. So, in this study, difficulty in comprehending a text arose from the inability to interpret signs in their context. This can also be evidenced by propositions that are misaligned with justifications.

6.2.2 Poor and restricted interpretation skills for verbal and non-verbal cues in cartoons often happen where readers may have low to moderate exposure to genre conventions,

© University of Venda

style, and discipline-specific meaning of signs. Familiarity with genre conventions and adequate knowledge of the appropriate register would then serve as further impetus.

6.2.3 Little to no prior knowledge or background context to support interpretation in a plausible manner. Reading unfamiliar texts requires a heightened level of interpretative repertoire. Firstly, it may involve understanding the cues around the text, which may be visual, spatial, or gestural. This can also entail understanding genre-specific conventions and meaning-making practices. Secondly, it can also involve understanding the domain- and discipline-specific factors that regulate how meaning is constructed. Cartoons use both linguistic and non-linguistic elements in composition and design; therefore, understanding aspects such as texture, positionality, and gaze would also serve as a basis for interpreting the text. The aspect of understanding literary terms that are used, like personification, cartoons also use such terms.

6.2.4 Insufficient to poor language usage and comprehension leading to unanswered questions and implausible responses. When respondents lack expressive vocabulary to decode texts, they often use vague and implausible expressions. This could indicate their inability to understand the equation or their inability to find the correct register to communicate a given expressive intent.

6.2.5 There were overt challenges with understanding the literary aspects of a text. Literary terms, often known as literary devices, are expressive tools that cartoonists use to convey a given thought, intention, or ideology. Such terms as are used in the text are often not overtly available to novice readers. For instance, hyperbole in non-linguistic texts, such as cartoons, often takes the form of caricature, where exaggeration is realised through ludicrous distortions of parts or characteristics. Furthermore, analogy-making is realised through symbolism and metaphorical representations, which are decoded in the context of the text. Without awareness and knowledge of these fundamental aspects of literary terms, readers may struggle to comprehend or correctly decode meaning in a given text, implicit or explicit.

© University of Venda

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Recommendations to the DBE and Curriculum Advisors

The study recommends that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and curriculum advisors **provide EFAL teachers with sustained, high-quality training** focused on developing and implementing effective strategies for reading comprehension, analysis, and interpretation of visual texts. Such training should equip teachers with the pedagogical skills required to help learners understand and critically engage with visual materials, including cartoons.

Curriculum advisors should also ensure **continuous professional support**, enabling EFAL teachers to strengthen learners' critical thinking skills. This includes designing assessment tasks that consistently require learners to interpret visual information, analyse multimodal features, and make plausible inferences. Regular monitoring and guidance will help maintain alignment between classroom practices and curriculum expectations for visual literacy.

6.3.2 Recommendations to EFAL Teachers

EFAL teachers are encouraged to provide intentional and ongoing support to learners to enhance their ability to comprehend and interpret cartoons and other visual texts. Teachers should integrate regular teaching, learning, and assessment activities that focus specifically on visual literacy to strengthen learners' interpretive skills.

Teachers should also build on learners' background knowledge, using contextual information to help them connect new visual content with prior experiences. This approach deepens understanding and enhances meaning-making.

Furthermore, teachers should teach visual literacy systematically and comprehensively, focusing on elements such as font type and size, layout, body language, gestures, and the contextual meaning of spoken or written text. Explicit instruction in these features will help learners understand how meaning is constructed in visual texts.

Finally, the study recommends continuous assessment and feedback in visual literacy. A range of assessment types—baseline, diagnostic, formative, and summative—should be

© University of Venda

used to support learner progress. Meaningful feedback will guide learners in recognizing areas for improvement and refining their visual interpretation skills.

6.3.3 Recommendations to Learners

Learners should be encouraged to actively participate in lessons by asking questions and seeking clarification whenever they struggle to understand visual texts. Active engagement is essential for improving comprehension.

The study further recommends that learners practise interpreting visual texts beyond the classroom, using diverse visual materials and attempting related questions regularly rather than waiting for assessments. Consistent exposure builds confidence, strengthens interpretive skills, and enhances overall language proficiency.

6.3.4 Recommendations to Society and Parents

To support the DBE, schools, teachers, parents, and society at large should play an active role in helping learners engage with the visual imagery encountered in daily life. Encouraging discussions about visual content—such as advertisements, posters, social media images, and cartoons—can help learners reflect on meaning and draw informed inferences.

Visual literacy should therefore be recognized not only as part of the school curriculum, but also as a critical component of everyday communication and new literacies. Society should promote the thoughtful and critical use of media by creating opportunities for learners to analyse and discuss visual texts. This collective effort will significantly strengthen learners' visual literacy skills.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the plausibility of the inferences learners make when decoding both linguistic and non-linguistic signs embedded in cartoons. Specifically, the study examined how Grade 10 and 11 learners interpret and draw inferences from verbal and non-verbal cues presented in cartoon-based questions, with the aim of identifying the challenges they encounter when engaging with visual texts.

© University of Venda

The study's findings revealed several significant difficulties. Learners demonstrated poor comprehension, limited and restricted prior knowledge, and weak interpretive skills, all of which hindered their ability to analyse and understand visual texts effectively. These challenges were evident across all performance levels, including below-average, average, and above-average learners, indicating that the difficulties associated with interpreting cartoons are not confined to a particular group but are widespread.

Overall, the study highlights the critical importance of ensuring that learners can correctly interpret visual information and make plausible, well-reasoned inferences when engaging with visual texts. Strengthening learners' visual literacy skills is therefore essential, as it directly influences their ability to comprehend multimodal material and respond appropriately to cartoon-based assessment tasks. This underscores the need for collaborative efforts among teachers, curriculum advisors, the DBE, parents, and society at large to support learners in developing the competencies required to navigate and interpret the increasingly visual nature of modern communication.

© University of Venda

References

Abekah Keelson, S., Odei Addo, J. and Dodor, A., 2024. The influence of lecturer non-verbal cues on student perceptions of teaching quality: the role of gender and age. *Cogent Education*, *11*(1), p.2325788.

Abi-Esber, N., 2023. *Conversational Cues, Interpersonal Judgements, and the Decision to Speak* (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University).

Abidin, Y., 2015. *Desain sistem pembelajaran dalam konteks Kurikulum 2013*. Bandung: Refika Aditama.

Abraham, G.S., Basheer, B.M., Sudhakaran, S. and Babu, R., 2021. A Study to Assess the Impact of Cartoon on Developmental Domains of Communication in Children Aged 4 to 6 Years. *International Journal of Health Sciences and Research (Www. ijhsr. org)*, *11*.

Adedoyin, O.B., 2020. Qualitative research methods. *Principles of social psychiatry*, pp.77-87.

Ainsworth, S.E. and Scheiter, K., 2021. Learning by drawing visual representations: Potential, purposes, and practical implications. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *30*(1), pp.61-67.

Ajayi, L., 2009. English as a second language learners' exploration of multimodal texts in a junior high school. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *52*(7), pp.585-595.

Alem, D.D., 2020. An overview of data analysis and interpretations in research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Education and Review*, *8*(1), pp.1-27.

Al Khalifa, H., 2024. *School Improvement and Turnaround in Bahrain Public Schools: A Multiple Case Study* (Doctoral dissertation, UCL (University College London)).

Almasi, J.F. and Fullerton, S.K., 2012. *Teaching strategic processes in reading*. Guilford Press.

Alomair, S.,2023 *The Impact of Non-Verbal and Verbal Cues on Classroom Management.*

© University of Venda

Allott, N., 2013. Relevance theory. In *Perspectives on linguistic pragmatics* (pp. 57-98). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Alsaif, A. and Masrai, A., 2019. Extensive Reading and Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition: The Case of a Predominant Language Classroom Input. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, *7*(2), pp.39-45.

Anderson, N. (2020). *Exploring second language reading: Issues and strategies*. Routledge.

Anstey, M. & Bull, G., 2018. *Communicating through multimodal texts and semiotic systems*. In: M. Anstey & G. Bull, eds. *Foundations of Multiliteracies*. 1st ed. Routledge, pp.47–66. Available at: Taylor & Francis Online

Archer, A. & Hughes, C., 2011, Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching, Guilford Publishers, New York, NY

Ardasheva, Y., Wang, Z., Roo, A.K., Adesope, O.O. and Morrison, J.A., 2018. Representation visuals' impacts on science interest and reading comprehension of adolescent English learners. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *111*(5), pp.631-643.

Arnott, L., Palaiologou, I., Gray, C., & Yelland, N. J. (2018). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Young children and multimodal learning with tablets. British Journal of Educational Technology, 49(5), 847-858. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12635

Arslan, S. (2013). A new concept in literacy: leisure literacy. Journal of Education and Sociology, 4(2), 145–149. doi: 10.7813/jes.2013/4-2/23

Asiamah, N., Mensah, H. K., & Oteng-Abayie, E. F. (2017). General, Target, and Accessible Population: Demystifying the Concepts for Effective Sampling. The Qualitative Report, 22(6), 1607-1622.

Aslan, Ş., Tay, B. and Uçuş-Güldalı, Ş., 2021. Primary school teachers' opinions regarding the use of cartoons and animations in life science education. *International Journal of Eurasian Education and Culture*, *6*(14), pp.2113-2165.

© University of Venda

Atlas, J.D., 2005. *Logic, meaning, and conversation: Semantical underdeterminacy, implicature, and their interface*. Oxford University Press.

Babbie, E. (2013). The Practice of Social Research. Cengage Learning.

Babbie, E. (2010). The Practice of Social Research (12th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Bhatia, V.K., 2016. Genre as interdiscursive performance in public space. *Genre and the Performance of Publics*, pp.25–42.

Bowen, T. and Whithaus, C. eds., 2013. *Multimodal literacies and emerging genres* (Vol. 163). University of Pittsburgh Press.

Brierley, J.A., 2017. The role of a pragmatist paradigm when adopting mixed methods in behavioural accounting research. *International Journal of Behavioural Accounting and Finance*, *6*(2), pp.140–154.

Brookhart, S.M., 2004. Assessment theory for college classrooms. *New directions for teaching and learning*, *2004*(100), pp.5–14.

Butcher, K.R., 2006. Learning from text with diagrams: Promoting mental model development and inference generation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *98*(1), p.182.

Carston, R. (2002). Thoughts and utterances: The pragmatics of explicit communication. Blackwell.

Castillo-Martínez, I.M. and Ramírez-Montoya, M.S., 2021, January. Research competencies to develop academic reading and writing: A systematic literature review. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 5, p. 576961). Frontiers Media SA.

Casteel, A., & Bridier, N. L. (2021). Describing populations and samples in doctoral student research. International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 16, 339–362.

Casula, M., Rangarajan, N. and Shields, P., 2020. The potential of working hypotheses for deductive exploratory research. *Quality & quantity*, *55*(5), p.1703.

© University of Venda

Ceja, C.R. and Xiong, C., 2021. Show or tell? Visual and Verbal Representations Bias Position Recall. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2108.08407*.

Chambers and Partners (2025) Data Protection & Privacy 2025: Global Practice Guide. Available at: Chambers Privacy Guide (Accessed: 20 August 2025).

Carmichael, C.L. and Mizrahi, M., 2023. Connecting cues: The role of nonverbal cues in perceived responsiveness. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *53*, p.101663.

Chen, I. J., & Graves, M. F. (2019). Teaching and learning vocabulary in a second language: Past, present, and future. *Language Teaching*, *52*(2), 147–180.

Clark, J.M. and Paivio, A., 1991. Dual coding theory and education. *Educational psychology review*, *3*(3), pp.149–210.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education* (7th ed.). Routledge.

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Coleman, J. M., & Dantzler, J. A. (2010, April 30–May 4). Graphics use in science trade books for children: A descriptive analysis [Paper presentation]. Annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Denver, CO, United States.

Collins, C., 2011. *Reading the written image: verbal play, interpretation, and the roots of iconophobia*. Penn State Press.

Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (1979). *Quasi-Experimentation: Design and Analysis Issues for Field Settings*. Houghton Mifflin.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. 4th Edition, Sage, Newbury Park.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* 4th ed.). SAGE.

Creswell, J., & Plano Clark, V. (2007). Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

© University of Venda

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). Designing and conducting mixed methods research (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications.

Crocker, R., Heigham, J., 2009. *Qualitative research in applied linguistics*: New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Daley, E. (2003). *Expanding the Concept of Literacy*. Educause Review, (March/April), 32–40.

DeKeyser, R. 2003. 'Implicit and explicit learning' in Doughty and Long (eds.)

Department of Basic Education, 2011. *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

DeWitt, S.L., Selfe, C.L., and Takayoshi, P., 2004. What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy.

Dolin, J., Black, P., Harlen, W. and Tiberghien, A., 2017. Exploring relations between formative and summative assessment. In *Transforming assessment: Through an interplay between practice, research and policy* (pp. 53–80). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Duke, N. K., Purcell-Gates, V., Hall, L. A., & Tower, C. (2006). Authentic literacy activities for developing comprehension and writing. The Reading Teacher, 60(4), 344–355. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.60.4.4

Dunlosky, J., Rawson, K.A., Marsh, E.J., Nathan, M.J., and Willingham, D.T., 2013. Improving students' learning with effective learning techniques: Promising directions from cognitive and educational psychology. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, *14*(1), pp.4–58.

Dweich, Z.A. and Al Ghabra, I.M.M.M., 2022. Cartoons: Themes and lessons: A semiotic analysis. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, *18*(2).

© University of Venda

Engelhardt, P.E. and Ferreira, F., 2010. Processing coordination ambiguity. *Language and speech*, *53*(4), pp.494–509.

Etikan, I. and Bala, K., 2017. Sampling and sampling methods. *Biometrics & Biostatistics International Journal*, *5*(6), p.00149.

Field, A. (2013). Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Fiorella, L. and Mayer, R.E., 2016. Effects of observing the instructor draw diagrams on learning from multimedia messages. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *108*(4), p.528.

Fiorella, L. and Mayer, R.E., 2022. 28 The Generative Activity Principle in Multimedia Learning.

Fletcher, T. and Bullock, S.M., 2012. Enacting literacy pedagogies: A collaborative self-study by teacher educators in physical education and science. *Studying Teacher Education*, *8*(1), pp.19–33.

Fowler, F. J. (2014). *Survey Research Methods* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Fransman, J. (2005). *Understanding literacy: a concept paper*. Paris, UNESCO. Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000145986 (Accessed: 15 October 2025).

Fromkin, V., Rodman, R. and Hyams, N., 2003. *Answer Key*. Heinle & Heinle Publishers.Ghanad, A., 2023. An overview of quantitative research methods. *International journal of multidisciplinary research and analysis*, *6*(08), pp.3794–3803.

Gieshoff, A.C. and Heeb, A.H., 2023. Cognitive load and cognitive effort: Probing the psychological reality of a conceptual difference. *Translation, Cognition & Behavior*, *6*(1), pp.3–28.

Gooda, T.M., 2022. *Reading re-cognized: fostering collaborative reading pedagogies to reconstruct reading teaching practice with secondary English teachers* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Sussex).

© University of Venda

Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a second language: Moving from theory to practice*. University Press.

Guo, D., Zhang, S., Wright, K.L. and McTigue, E.M., 2020. Do you get the picture? A meta-analysis of the effect of graphics on reading comprehension. *AERA Open*, *6*(1), p.2332858420901696.

Gurlitt, J. and Renkl, A., 2010. Prior knowledge activation: How different concept mapping tasks lead to substantial differences in cognitive processes, learning outcomes, and perceived self-efficacy. *Instructional Science*, *38*(4), pp.417–433.

Gutt, E. A. (2000). Translation and relevance: Cognition and context. St. Jerome.

Halme, M., Piekkari, R., Matos, S., Wierenga, M. and Hall, J., 2024. Rigour vs. reality: Contextualizing qualitative research in the low-income settings in emerging markets. *British Journal of Management*, *35*(1), pp.36–51.

Hayes, D. A., & Reinking, D. (1991). Good and poor readers' use of graphic aids is cued in texts and in adjunct study materials. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 16(4), 391–398. https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-476X(91)90016-E

Hassan, M., 2024. Informed Consent in Research – Types, Templates, and Examples. [online] ResearchMethod.net. Available at: <https://researchmethod.net/informed-consent-in-research/> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2025].

Heath, J., Williamson, H., Williams, L., & Harcourt, D. (2018). "It's just more personal": Using multiple methods of qualitative data collection to facilitate participation in research focusing on sensitive subjects. Applied Nursing Research, 43, 30–35.

Hodge, R.I.V. and Kress, G.R., 1988. *Social semiotics*. Cornell University Press.

Horváth, I., 2012. Interpreter behaviour. *A Psychological Approach. Budapest: Hang Nyelviskola*.

Huang, Yan. 2011. Types of inference: entailment, presupposition, and implicature. In Bublitz, Wolfram and Neal R. Norrick (eds.), Foundations of Pragmatics, 397–421. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter.

© University of Venda

Huang, Y. (2007). Pragmatics. Oxford University Press.

Huynh, Q.T. and Yang, Y.C., 2024. Impact of fill-in-the-nodes concept maps on low prior-knowledge students learning chemistry: a study on the learning achievements and attitude toward concept maps. *Chemistry Education Research and Practice*, *25*(1), pp.360–374.

Hyland, K., 2005. Stance and engagement: A model of interaction in academic discourse. *Discourse studies*, *7*(2), pp.173–192.

Islam, M.A. and Aldaihani, F.M.F., 2022. Justification for adopting the qualitative research method, research approaches, sampling strategy, sample size, interview method, saturation, and data analysis. *Journal of International Business and Management*, *5*(1), pp.01–11.

Jahangir Arko, C.A., 2012. *Museum & Institution for Cartoon & Comic Art (MICCA)* (Doctoral dissertation, BRAC University).

Jakobsen, I.K., 2022. Multimodality and literacy practices in English: Exploring the role of multimodal texts in English language teaching in Norway.

Jaya, A., 2017. The effect of using a problem-based learning strategy on students' speaking achievement. *Journal of English Education and Teaching*, 1(1), pp.50–60.

Jixing, L. and Shiyi, Z., 2019. Trends of qualitative research in applied linguistics since the new millennium. *Canadian social science*, *15*(7), pp.11–14.

Johnson, M. (2024). Relevance theory and the social realities of communication. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14,* Article 1167790. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1167790

Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2014). Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Jumiati, A.A., 2014. Inference Strategy to Improve the Students' Literal Comprehension. *Exposure*, *3*(2), pp.219–222.

Junjie, M. and Yingxin, M., 2022. The Discussions of Positivism and Interpretivism. *Online*

© University of Venda

Kanoksilapatham, B., 2009. Generic structure of research article abstracts in sciences. *Journal of English Studies*, *4*, pp.95-111.

Kerlinger, F. N., & Lee, H. B. (2000). *Foundations of behavioral research (4th ed.). Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. Submission*, *4*(1), pp.10–14.

Khan, N., Khalique, F. and Saini, K., 2025. Qualitative research methods: harnessing interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis. In *Qualitative Research Methods in Air Transport Management* (pp. 27–56). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.

Khuman, P., 2024. The impact of non-verbal communication in teaching: Enhancing educational effectiveness. *A Global Journal of Humanities*, *7*, p.89.

Kiili, C., Strømsø, H.I., Bråten, I., Ruotsalainen, J. and Räikkönen, E., 2024. Reading comprehension skills and prior topic knowledge serve as resources when adolescents justify the credibility of multiple online texts. *Reading Psychology*, *45*(7), pp.662–689.

Kilpatrick, D.A., 2015. *Essentials of assessing, preventing, and overcoming reading Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2006). Research ethics for social scientists. SAGE.*

difficulties. John Wiley & Sons.

Kissel, B., Hathaway, J.I., and Wood, K.D., 2010. Digital collaborative literacy: Using wikis to promote social learning and literacy development. *Middle School Journal*, *41*(5), pp.58–64.

Kress, G. and Bezemer, J., 2015. A social semiotic multimodal approach to learning. *E, Hargreaves & D Scott (Eds.), The SAGE handbook of learning*, pp.155–168.

Kline, R. B. (2015). *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*. Guilford Press.

Kress, G. R. (2003). Literacy in the new media age. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203299234

Lakens, D., 2022. Sample size justification. *Collabra: psychology*, *8*(1), p.33267.

Lee, J.J. and Pinker, S., 2010. Rationales for indirect speech: the theory of the strategic speaker. *Psychological review*, *117*(3), p.785.

© University of Venda

Ley, K. and Gannon-Cook, R., 2023. Instructional Design and Semiotics. In *Toward Inclusive Learning Design: Social Justice, Equity, and Community* (pp. 55–70). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

Lilia, M., 2015. *The Effect of Explicit Instruction of Reading Strategies on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension* (Doctoral dissertation, Ministry of Higher Education).

Lim, W.M., 2025. What is qualitative research? An overview and guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, *33*(2), pp.199–229.

Luft, J.A., Jeong, S., Idsardi, R., and Gardner, G., 2022. Literature reviews, theoretical frameworks, and conceptual frameworks: An introduction for new biology education researchers. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, *21*(3), p.rm33.

Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2015). Second language research: Methodology and design. Routledge.

Maeda, J. (2006). The laws of simplicity. MIT Press

Mayer, R. E. (2002). Multimedia learning. Psychology of learning and motivation, 41, 85–139. Cambridge, MA: Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0079-7421(02)80005-6
Mayer, R. E. (2014). The Cambridge handbook of multimedia learning (2nd ed.). New York., NY: Cambridge University Press.

McTigue, E.M., 2009. Does multimedia learning theory extend to middle school students? *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *34*(2), pp.143–153.

Menard, S. (2002). *Longitudinal Research*. Sage Publications.

Meneses, A., Montenegro, M., Acevedo, D., Figueroa, J. and Hugo, E., 2023. Cross-disciplinary language changes in 4th graders as predictors of the quality of written scientific explanations. *Journal of Writing Research*, *15*(1), pp.105–132.

Mertens, D. M. (2014). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity With Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods. Sage Publications.

© University of Venda

Mezmir, E.A., 2020. Qualitative data analysis: An overview of data reduction, data display, and interpretation. *Research on humanities and social sciences*, *10*(21), pp.15–27.

Mkandawire, S. B. (2019). Selected Common Methods and Tools for Data Collection in Research. In: M. K. Banja (Ed.). Selected Readings in Education Volume 2. (pp.143–153)

Mohammed-Ahmed, H., 2021. A multimodal literacy approach to foreign language instruction. *Applied language learning*, *31*(1-2), pp.15–28.

Mohlabi-Tlaka, N., De Jager, L.J. and Engelbrecht, A., 2017. Policy, practice, purpose: the text-based approach in contemporary South African EFAL classrooms. *Per Linguam: A Journal of Language Learning= Per Linguam: Tydskrif vir Taalaanleer*, *33*(2), pp.22-35.

Moru, E.K. and Mathunya, M., 2022. A Constructivist Analysis of Grade 8 Learners' Errors and Misconceptions in Simplifying Mathematical Algebraic Expressions. *Journal of Research and Advances in Mathematics Education*, *7*(3), pp.130–144.

Moser, A. and Korstjens, I., 2018. Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection, and analysis. *European journal of general practice*, *24*(1), pp.9–18.

Morgan, H., 2022. Conducting a qualitative document analysis. *The qualitative report*, *27*(1), pp.64–77.

Mweshi, G.K. and Sakyi, K., 2020. Application of sampling methods for the research design. *Archives of Business Review 8*(11), pp.180–193.

Mwita, K., 2022. Factors to consider when choosing data collection methods. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478)*, *11*(5), pp.532-538.

Nadalini, A., Marzi, C., Ferro, M., Cinini, A., Cutugno, P. and Chiarella, D., 2025. Inferential Reading Skills in High School: A Study on Comprehension Profiles. *Education Sciences*, *15*(6), p.654.

Neuman, W. L. (2011). Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches (7th ed.). Pearson.

© University of Venda

Nikolopoulou, K., 2022. What is convenience sampling?| Definition & examples. *Scribbr.com website*.

Nuttall, C. (2005). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language* (2nd ed.). Macmillan

Nyimbili, F. and Nyimbili, L., 2024. Types of purposive sampling techniques with their examples and applications in qualitative research studies.

Oakhill, J.V. and Cain, K., 2021. Assessment of comprehension in reading. In *The Psychological Assessment of Reading* (pp. 176-203). Routledge.

Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Pang, H.T., Zhou, X. and Chu, M., 2024. Cross-cultural differences in using nonverbal behaviors to identify indirect replies. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, *48*(2), pp.323–344.

Pardo, L.S., 2004, 'What every teacher needs to know about comprehension', The Reading Teacher 58(3), 272–280. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.58.3.5

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. Sage Publications.

Pawar, N., 2020. Type of research and type of research design. *Social Research Methodology*, *8*(1), pp.46–57.

Pedrazzini, A. and Scheuer, N., 2019. Modal functioning of rhetorical resources in selected multimodal cartoons. *Semiotica*, *2019*(230), pp.275–310.

Peelle, J.E., 2018. Listening effort: how the cognitive consequences of acoustic challenge are reflected in brain and behavior. *Ear and Hearing*, 39(2), pp.204–214.

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2017). Nursing Research: Generating and Assessing Evidence for Nursing Practice (10th ed.). Wolters Kluwer.

Prawiro, H., 2018. Multiliteracy Learning and Character Development in the 21st Century. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 8(2), pp.85–90.

© University of Venda

Preszler, J. (2006). On target: Strategies to make readers make meaning through inferences (grade 4–2). E S A Regions 6&7. Retrieved from http://www.rainbowschools.ca/virtual_library/te

Pretorius, E.J. and Lephalala, M., 2011. Reading comprehension in high-poverty schools: How should it be taught and how well does it work?. *Per Linguam: a Journal of Language Learning= Per Linguam: Tydskrif vir Taalaanleer*, *27*(2), pp.1-24.

Purnell, K.N., Solman, R.T. and Sweller, J., 1991. The effects of technical illustrations on cognitive load. *Instructional Science*, *20*(5), pp.443–462.

Rahman, S.A., Tuckerman, L., Vorley, T. and Gherhes, C., 2021. Resilient research in the field: Insights and lessons from adapting qualitative research projects during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International journal of qualitative methods*, *20*, p.16094069211016106.

Rahmanita, D., 2019. Developing scientific thinking through multiliteracy learning models. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Studies*, 22(1), pp.65–72.

Reber, A. 1967. 'Implicit learning of artificial grammars.' Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior, 6, 855–863.

Rice, M., Wijekumar, K., Lambright, K., and Bristow, A., 2024. Inferencing in reading comprehension: Examining variations in definition, instruction, and assessment. *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*, *29*(3), pp.1169–1190.

Ritunga, I.R. et al. (2025) 'Privacy and Confidentiality in Telemedicine: A Literature Review', *Christian Journal for Global Health*, 12(1), pp. 74–82. Available at: CJGH article (Accessed: 20 August 2025

Rost, M., 2005. L2 Listening. In *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 503–527). Routledge.

Rupley, W.H., Blair, T.R. & Nichols, W.D., 2009, 'Effective reading instruction for struggling readers: The role of direct/explicit teaching', Reading and Writing Quarterly 25, 125–138. https://doi.org/10.1080/10573560802683523

© University of Venda

Schieble, M. (2011). A case for interruption in the virtual English classroom with the graphic novel American Born Chinese. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, 34*(2), 202–218.

Schnotz, W. (2014). Integrated model of text and picture comprehension. In R. E. Mayer (Ed.), The Cambridge handbook of multimedia learning (2nd ed., pp. 72–103). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139547369.006

Schnotz, W., & Bannert, M. (2003). Construction and interference in learning from multiple representations. Learning and Instruction, 13(2), 141–156. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959- 4752(02)00017-8

Schnotz, W., Picard, E., & Hron, A. (1993). How do successful and unsuccessful learners use texts and graphics? Learning and Instruction, 3(3), 181–199. https://doi.org/10.1016/0959-4752(93)90003-I

Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2002). Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference. Houghton Mifflin.

Sieber, J. E. (1992). The ethics of social research: Surveys and experiments. Springer.

Smith, L., & Nguyen, T. (2018). *Teaching English as a foreign language: An introduction*. Routledge.

Stemele, B.P. and Jina Asvat, Z., 2024. Exploring learner errors and misconceptions in algebraic expressions with Grade 9 learners through the use of algebra tiles. *African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, *28*(1), pp.153-170.

South Africa. National Department of Basic Education, 2011, National Curriculum Statement, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: Intermediate phase Grade 4–6, Government Printers, Pretoria.

Sperber, D., F. Cara, and V. Girotto. (1995). 'Relevance theory explains the selection task.' Cognition 57, 31–95.

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (1986). Relevance: communication and cognition (2nd edn.

© University of Venda

1995). Oxford: Blackwell.

Spicciarelli, G., Gheller, F., Celli, M. and Arfé, B., 2025. The effect of unintelligible speech noise on children's verbal working memory performance. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *16*, p.1565112.

Stanley, M., 2023. Qualitative descriptive: A very good place to start. In *Qualitative research methodologies for occupational science and occupational therapy* (pp. 52–67). Routledge.

Stebbins, R. A. (2001). Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences. Sage Publications.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory. Sage Publications.

Sperber, D. (2001). The epistemic theory of testimony. Journal of Philosophy, 98(7), 366–401.

Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1986). Relevance: Communication and cognition. Blackwell.

Spaull, N., 2015, 'Schooling in South Africa: How low-quality education becomes a poverty trap', South African Child Gauge 12(1), 34–41.

Sujiati, N., Jaya, A., and Rosmiyati, R., 2024. Multiliteracy-based learning in the digital era. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 18(1), pp.100–110.

Swales, J.M., 2004. *Research genres: Explorations and applications*. Cambridge University Press.

Taguchi, N., 2002. An application of relevance theory to the analysis of L2 interpretation processes: The comprehension of indirect replies.

Taibi, M. and Ozolins, U., 2023. Quality and integrity in the translation of official documents. *Perspectives*, *31*(5), pp.882–899.

Taherdoost, H., 2021. Data collection methods and tools for research: a step-by-step guide to choosing data collection techniques for academic and business research projects. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM)*, *10*(1), pp.10–38.

© University of Venda

Taherdoost, H., 2022. What are the different research approaches? Comprehensive Review of Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method research, their applications, types, and limitations. *Journal of Management Science & Engineering Research*, *5*(1), pp.53–63.

The New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. Harvard educational review, 66(1), 60-93

Tierney, R.J., & Pearson, P.D. (2024). Fact-checking the Science of Reading: Opening up the conversation. Literacy Research Commons. https://literacyresearchcommons.org

Tonglet, J., Thiem, G., and Gurevych, I., 2025. COVE: Context and Veracity prediction for out-of-context images. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2502.01194*.

Totry, M. & Medzini, A., 2013. *The use of cartoons in popular protests focus on geographic, social, economic, and political issues*. European Journal of Geography, 4(1), pp.22–35. Available at: https://eurogeojournal.eu/articles/EJG_6021_Naji%20Al%202013_final_1.pdf

Trouillet, L., Bothe, R., Mani, N. and Elsner, B., 2024. Investigating the role of verbal cues on learning of tool-use actions in 18-and 24-month-olds in an online looking time experiment. *Frontiers in Developmental Psychology*, *2*, p.1411276.

Trumpower, D.L. and Goldsmith, T.E., 2004. Structural enhancement of learning. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *29*(4), pp.426–446.

UNESCO (2017). E2030: Education and skills for the 21st century. Santiago: OREALC/UNESCO. Disponible en http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Santi ago/pdf/Meeting-Report-Buenos-Aires-2017-E2030-LAC-ENG.pdf

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UWEC) Center for Writing Excellence. (2015). Multimodal pedagogy. Retrieved May 21, 2015, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=elKKQ1 BvAoY

© University of Venda

Ugwu, C.I., Ekere, J.N. and Onoh, C., 2021. Research paradigms and methodological choices in the research process. Journal of Applied Information Science and Technology, 14(2), pp.116-124

van der Waldt, G., 2024. Constructing theoretical frameworks in social science research. *Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, *20*(1), pp.1–12.

Wang, Z., 2024, July. Empirical Study on Cross-cultural Communication and Context-based Teaching in High School English Reading. In *2024 2nd International Conference on Language, Innovative Education and Cultural Communication (CLEC 2024)* (pp. 491–497). Atlantis Press.

Warnidah, N. and Suwarno, B., 2016. STUDENTS ' DIFFICULTIES IN MAKING INFERENCE IN READING NARRATIVE PASSAGES AT THE SOCIAL ELEVENTH GRADE OF SMAN 1 CURUP. *JOALL (Journal of Applied Linguistics and Literature)*, *1*(2), pp.78–94.

Wetherell, M. and Potter, J., 1988. Discourse analysis and the identification of interpretative repertoires. *Analysing everyday explanation: A casebook of methods*, *1688183*.

Whitehead, M.R., 2010. Language & literacy in the early years 0-7.

Wildenger, L.K., Hofer, B.K., and Burr, J.E., 2010. Epistemological development in very young knowers. *Personal epistemology in the classroom: Theory, research, and implications for practice*, pp.220–257.

Willie, M. M. (2022). Differentiating Between Population and Target Population in Research Studies. *International Journal of Medical Science and Clinical Research Studies*, 2(6), Article 14

Wilson, D., 2023. The relevance of words and the language/communication divide. Frontiers in Psychology, [online] 14, Article 1187343. Available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1187343/pdf> [Accessed 22 Oct. 2025].

Wilson, D., 2019. Relevance theory. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*.

© University of Venda

Wilson, D., 2018. Relevance theory and literary interpretation. *Reading beyond the code: Literature and relevance theory*, *185*.

Wilson, D., & Sperber, D. (2004). Relevance theory. In L. Horn & G. Ward (Eds.), The handbook of pragmatics (pp. 607–632). Blackwell.

Wilson, D. and Sperber, D., 1981. Irony and the use-mention distinction. *Philosophy*, *3*(1), pp.143–184.

Winn, M.B. and Teece, K.H., 2021. Listening effort is not the same as the speech intelligibility score. *Trends in Hearing*, *25*, p.23312165211027688.

Wolf, M., 2018. *Reader, come home: The reading brain in a digital world*. Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.

Won, D., 2023. *Teaching digital-multimodal composition for digital-born students: Exploring pedagogical applications of interactive narrative media* (Doctoral dissertation).

Yi, Y., & Angay-Crowder, T. (2016). Multimodal pedagogies for teacher education in TESOL. TESOL Quarterly, 50(4), 988–998. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.326

Yus, F., 2009. Relevance theory.

Zano, K., 2023. From the teachers' perspectives: resources used in teaching reading comprehension to English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners in the FET phase. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *27*(3), pp.376–388.

Zhang, Y., 2025. Use of Schema Theory in the Teaching of Reading Comprehension. *Education and Social Work*, *2*(1), pp.138–147.

Zidane, A. and Zerrouki, N., 2025. The Semiotics of Silence and Non-verbal Communication in Education: A Systematic Literature Review.

Zlatev, J. and Möttönen, T., 2022. Cognitive linguistics and semiotics. *Bloomsbury semiotics*, *4*, pp.269–292.

Zwiers, Jeff. (2005). *Building reading comprehension habits in grades.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association

© University of Venda

APPENDIX A University Clearance Certificate

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
Mrs AP Nelwamondo

STUDENT NO:
14007316

PROJECT TITLE: An evaluation of Grades 10 and 11 learners' interpretative repertoire of verbal and nonverbal cues on cartoons: a case of selected English First Additional Language learners, Sibasa circuit of Limpopo Province.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: FHSSE/25/EMS/18/0509

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Dr TE Sikitime	UNIVEN, English, Media and Linguistics	Supervisor
Dr NV Demana	UNIVEN, English, Media and Linguistics	Co-supervisor
Mrs AP Nelwamondo	UNIVEN, English, Media and Linguistics	Investigator -Student

Type: Master's Research
Risk: *Minimal risk to humans, animals, or environment (Category 2)*
Approval Period: September 2025 – September 2026

The Research Ethics Social Science Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following.

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
  - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project.
  - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
  - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,
  - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
  - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
  - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
  - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
  - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Date Considered: September 2025

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee: Prof M. Mwale-Manjoro

Signature: Mwale

University of Venda
PRIVATE BAG X5050, THOHOYANDOU, 0950, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA
TELEPHONE (015) 962 8504/8313 FAX (015) 962 9060
"A quality driven financially sustainable, rural-based Comprehensive University"

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
2025 -09- 05
Private Bag X5050
Thohoyandou 0950

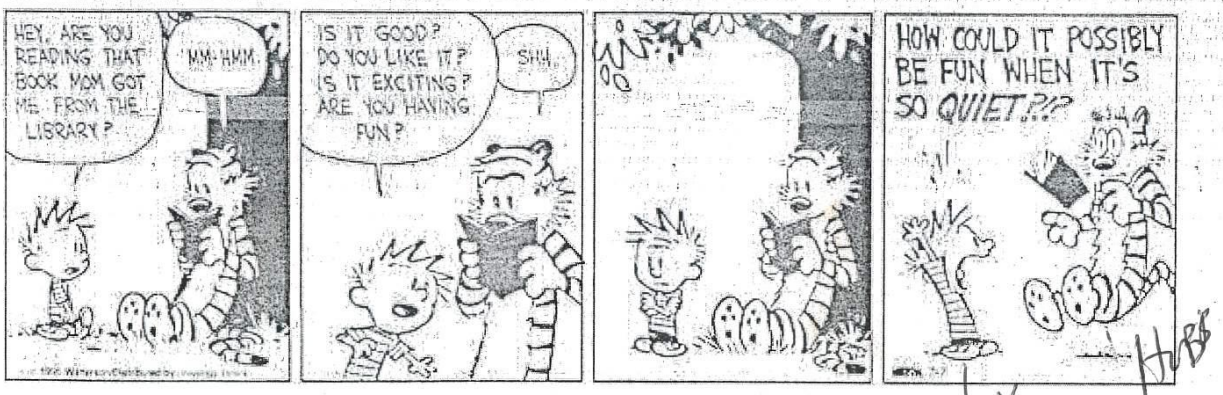
© University of Venda

APPENDIX B: 2024 Grade 10 June assessment

QUESTION 4: ANALYSING A CARTOON

Study the cartoon (TEXT E) and answer the questions set on it.

TEXT E



[Source: www. Calvinandhobbs.com, accessed on 11 April 2018]

Refer to frames 1 and 2

What evidence from the frames indicates Hobbs' total concentration in the book?

Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence. Write down the question number and the letter **(A-D)** of the correct answer.

Hobbs' facial expression in frame 2 indicates that he finds Calvin's questions …

A. interesting

B. inquisitive

C. annoying

D. pleasant

Refer to frame 1

Do you think Calvin has read the book he is referring to? Provide a reason for your answer.

Refer to frame 4

How are Calvin's words emphasized? Mention two techniques.

© University of Venda

Describe Hobbs' reaction to Calvin's outburst.

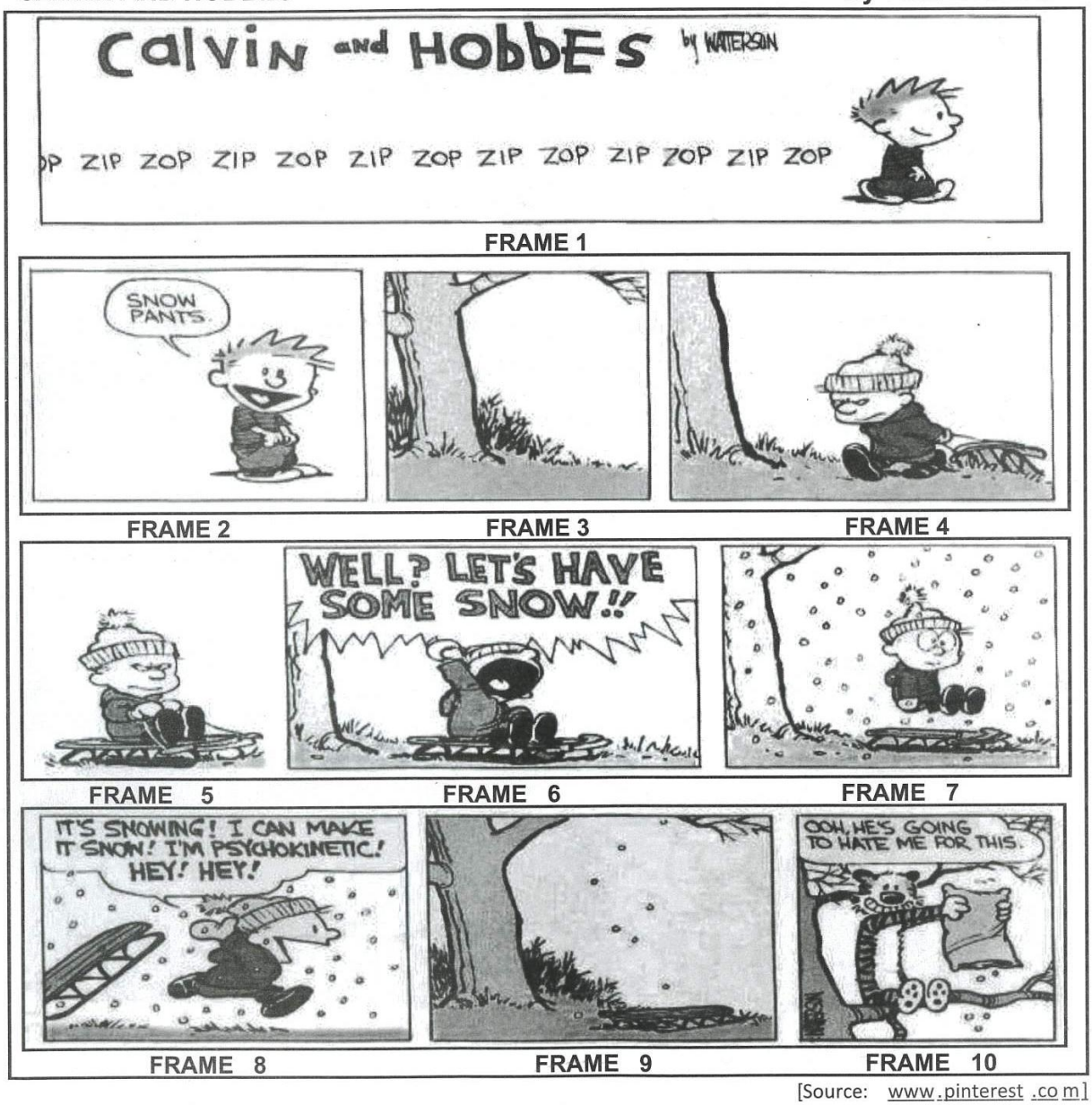
Explain the humour in this cartoon.

QUESTION 4: ANALYSING A CARTOON

Read the cartoon (TEXT E) below and answer the set questions.

TEXT E

CALVIN AND HOBBES **by WATTERSON**



[Source: www.pinterest.com]

© University of Venda

APPENDIX C: 2024 Grade 10 November assessment

NSC

4.2 Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence:

Calvin's facial expression in FRAME 2 indicates that he is... NV

A. restless
B. nervous
C. anxious
D. excited

(1)

4.3 Refer to FRAME 6.

Explain how the cartoonist conveys that Calvin is shouting. Refer to ONE verbal and ONE visual clue. VC & NV

(2)

4.4 Describe how Calvin's actions in FRAME 7 are in contrast to his actions in FRAME 8. Refer to the visual aspects ONLY. NV

(2)

4.5 Study the following sentence:

'Ooh, he's going to hate me for this.'

4.5.1 Provide part of speech of the underlined word. (1)

4.5.2 Use an antonym of 'hate' in a sentence of your own. (1)

4.6 Do you think Hobbes' behaviour is acceptable in this cartoon? Substantiate your answer. Inference (2)

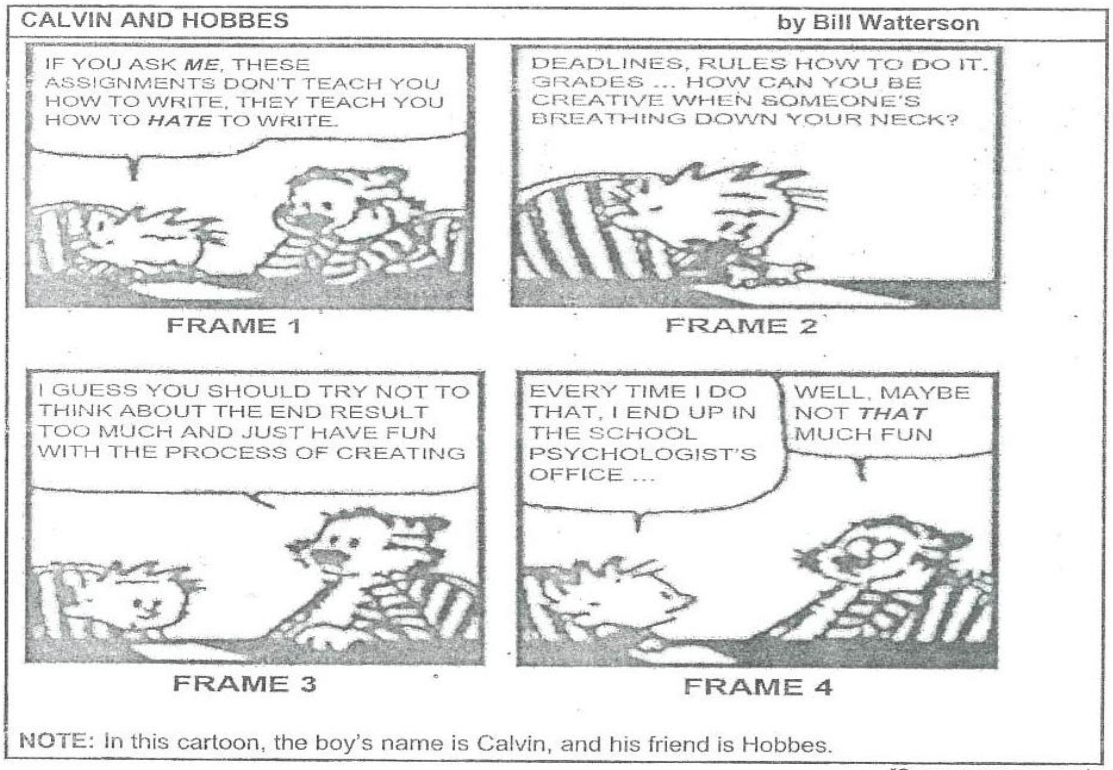
[10]

© University of Venda

QUESTION 4

ANALYSING A CARTOON

Read the cartoon (TEXT E) below and answer the set questions.



[Source: www.google.com]

© University of Venda

APPENDIX D: 2024 Grade 11 June assessment

4.1 Refer to FRAME 1.

4.1.1 Provide a homophone for the word 'write'. (1)

4.1.2 Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence:

Calvin feels ... about completing his writing task.

A. Excited
B. happy
C. frustrated
D. emotional (1)

4.2. Refer to FRAME 2.

4.2.1 Why does the cartoonist use the ellipsis? (1)

4.2.2 Who is 'breathing down' Calvin's neck? (1)

4.3 Refer to FRAMES 3 and 4.

4.3.1 Using your own words, explain what advice Hobbes gives Calvin in FRAME 3? (2)

4.3.2 Describe how Hobbes' emotions in FRAME 3 are in contrast to his emotions in FRAME 4, by referring to his facial expression. (2)

4.4 Do you think Calvin's attitude towards his schoolwork is justified? Substantiate your answer (2)
[10]

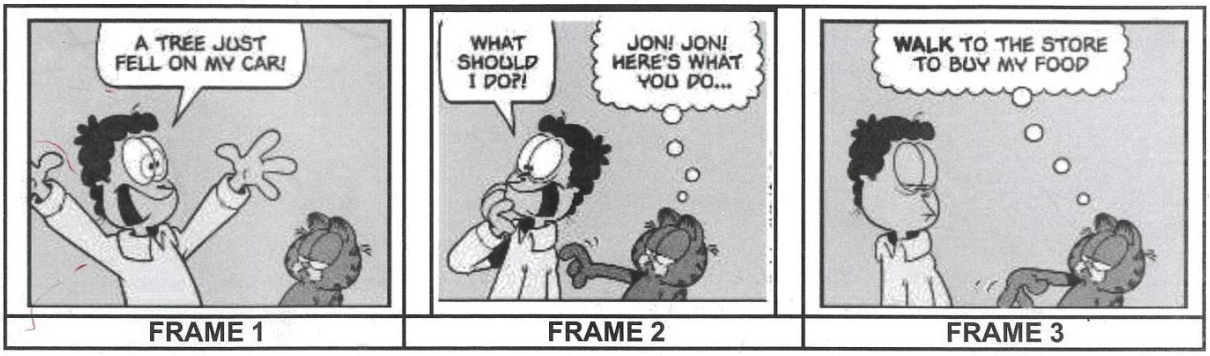
© University of Venda

QUESTION 4: ANALYSING A CARTOON

Read the cartoon (TEXT E) below and answer the set questions.

TEXT E

GARFIELD **by JIM DAVIES**



[Source: www.cartoons.com]

© University of Venda

APPENDIX E: 2024 Grade 11 November assessment

NOTE: In the cartoon, the man's name is Jon and his cat is Garfield.

4.1 Refer to FRAME 1.

4.1.1 Describe Jon's body language. non-verbal cues (2)

4.1.2 How does Garfield respond to Jon's remarks? (1)

4.2 Refer to FRAME 2.

4.2.1 Write what the lines above Garfield's fingers suggest. non-verbal cue (1)

4.2.2 Rewrite the underlined word in formal English.

Jon! Jon! Here's what you do… (1)

4.3 Refer to FRAME 3.

4.3.1 Provide an antonym of the word, 'buy'. (1)

4.3.2 Explain Jon's sudden change of facial expression in this frame. Inference (2)

4.4 Discuss how the cartoonist was successful in creating irony in this cartoon. (2)

[10]

© University of Venda

APPENDIX F: Editorial letter

20/02/2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Editing and Proofreading Report for Anza Pearl Nelwamondo, student number 14007316

This letter serves to confirm that Muandi Onpoint Language Services has proofread and edited a master's dissertation by Olgah Nyarhi (18022834) from the University of Venda, titled: *The Usage Of Verbs In Argumentative Essays: A Case Of Selected Grade 7 English First Additional Language Learners In Mvudi Circuit, Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province*

The submission was carefully read through, focusing on the formulation of ideas, word choice, syntactic correctness, and conventions.

The recommended suggestions were highlighted.

Yours Sincerely

Muandi Onpoint Language Services

Tel.: 0675794813

E-mail: Muanditrading@gmail.com

© University of Venda

APPENDIX G: Turnitin report

An Evaluation of Grades 10 and 11 English First Additional Language Learners' Interpretation of Verbal and Nonverbal Cues in Cartoons: A Case Study of the Sibasa Circuit, Limpopo Province

ORIGINALITY REPORT

13%	4%	%	9%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to University of Venda Student Paper	9%
2	www.dliflc.edu Internet Source	2%
3	www.scribd.com Internet Source	2%

© University of Venda