

**A STUDY OF THE ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES
UTILISED BY LEVEL- ONE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA**

by

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DECLARATION

I, **Demana Ndishunwani Vincent**, hereby declare that the dissertation for the Master of Arts degree at the University of Venda, hereby submitted by me, has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other institution, and that this is my own work in design and execution and that all reference material contained therein have been duly acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my dear wife Mokhadi whose devotion, inspiration, support, and love have made our dream a reality.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the English reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda.

The respondents in this study were three hundred and nine level-one students from various Schools in the University of Venda who were doing English Communication Skills (ECS) course in the 2016 academic year. The study adopted a mixed methods research design (quantitative and qualitative research approaches). Data were collected by means of a self-completion questionnaire of the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey. The researcher employed descriptive statistics to analyse frequency use of each reading strategy using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and usage level. Open-ended data were summarised by using grouping technique.

The results of the study revealed that the participants in this study were, to a large extent, aware of what they were doing when reading as they reported utilising English reading strategies with different frequencies and with the high and moderate levels of reading strategy usage. The highest mean frequency with which the respondents used a given category of strategies when reading English academic materials was 3.98 (high) which was derived from the category of problem-solving strategies, while the category of support reading strategies and global reading strategies were reported being used with the relative mean of 3.79 (high) and 3.57 (high) respectively. The findings can be helpful to students in increasing their awareness of reading strategies while reading, improving their understanding of the reading process, and enhancing confidence in their own reading ability and to teachers and lecturers in helping their students learn to become constructively responsive and thoughtful readers, which will promote academic reading skills and ultimately enhance academic achievement.

Keywords: reading, reading comprehension, reading strategies, second language

LIST OF TABLES

CONTENT	PAGE
Table 4.1: Biographical information of the respondents.....	56
Table 4.2: Summary of English Reading Strategies Questionnaire Responses ..	60
Table 4.3: I Read Slowly and Carefully to Make Sure I Understand what I am Reading	65
Table 4.4: When Textbook Becomes Difficult, I Read Aloud to Help Me Understand what I Read.....	68
Table 4.5: Global Reading Strategies	70
Table 4.6: Problem-Solving Reading Strategies	73
Table 4.7: Support Reading Strategies.....	75
Table 4.8: Five Most Frequently Used Strategies	78
Table 4.9: Five Least Frequently Used Strategies	81

LIST OF FIGURES

CONTENT	PAGE
Figure 3.1: A map of Thohoyandou.....	42
Figure 4.1: Age of the respondents.....	58
Figure 4.2: Schools of the respondents	59
Figure 4.3: I Read Slowly and Carefully to Make Sure I Understand what I am Reading	65
Figure 4.4: When Textbook Becomes Difficult, I Read Aloud to Help Me Understand what I Read.....	69

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENT	PAGE
Dedication	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii
List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
Chapter One: Orientation of the Study	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background to the Study	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem	3
1.4 Aim of the Study	3
1.5 Objectives of the Study	4
1.6 Research Questions	4
1.7 Research Assumptions	4
1.8 Definition of Key Terms	5
1.9 Significance of the Study	6
1.10 Delimitations of the Study	7
1.11 Outline of the Study	7
1.12 Conclusion	8
Chapter Two: Review of Literature	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Importance of Reading in ESL/EFL Context	9
2.3 Reading and the Reading Process	10
2.4 Factors in the Reading Process	12
2.4.1 Davies (1968):	13
2.4.2 Lunzer <i>et al.</i> (1979):	13
2.4.3 Munby (1978):	13
2.4.4 Grabe (1991)	14
2.5 Theories of L2 Reading	16
2.5.1 Bottom-up Models	17
2.5.2 Top-down Models	18
2.5.3 Interactive Models	19
2.6 Reading Strategies	23
2.6.1 Brown's strategies for reading comprehension	25
2.6.2 Stages of developmental reading growth	27
2.6.3 Reading strategy checklist	29
2.6.4 Sources of difficulty in ESL and EFL reading	31

2.6.5	Reading strategies used by proficient readers	37
2.7	Conclusion	40
Chapter Three: Methodology		42
3.1	Introduction	42
3.2	Research Site	42
3.3	Research Design	43
3.4	Population and Sample	45
3.5	Instrumentation	46
3.6	Procedures	49
3.7	Data Analysis	50
3.8	Ethical Considerations	53
3.8.1	Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation	53
3.8.2	Protection from Harm	54
3.8.3	Confidentiality	54
3.8.4	Validity and Reliability	54
3.9	Conclusion	55
Chapter Four: Research Findings.....		56
4.1	Introduction	56
4.2	Biographical Information of the Respondents	56
4.3	Reading Strategies Utilised by Level-One Students at the University of Venda	59
4.3.1	Global Reading Strategies Utilised by the Level-One Students at the University of Venda.....	69
4.3.2	Problem-Solving Reading Strategies Utilised by the Level-One Students at the University of Venda.....	72
4.3.3	Support Reading Strategies utilised by the Level-One Students at the University of Venda.....	74
4.3.4	Five Most Frequently Used Reading Strategies Utilised by the level-One Students at the University of Venda.....	77
4.3.5	Five Least Frequently Used Strategies Utilised by the Level-One Students at the University of Venda.....	79
4.4	Other Reading Strategies Utilised by Level One Students at the University of Venda	82
4.5	Conclusion	84
Chapter Five: Conclusions, Discussion and Recommendations.....		85
5.1	Introduction	85
5.2	Summary of the Study	85
5.2.1	Objectives of the Study	85
5.2.2	Participants, Instrumentation and Procedure	85
5.3	Summary of the Findings	87
5.3.1	The Students' Biographical Information	87
5.3.2	The Students' Frequency Use of English Reading Strategies	87

5.3.3	The Students' Additional Reading Strategies.....	88
5.4	Discussion of the Study Results	88
5.4.1	Research Questions One and Two	89
5.4.2	Research Question Three.....	91
5.5	Implications of the Study Findings	92
5.6	Recommendations for Future Research	94
5.7	Conclusion	94
	References	96
	Appendices	108
	Appendix A: Questionnaire.....	108
	Appendix B: Consent to Participate in the Study.....	113

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the entire study. It begins with a background to the study followed by statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study, research questions, definition of key terms, significance of the study, assumptions underpinning the study, outline of the study and conclusion.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

University students are required to read large amounts of academic and non-academic materials in the course of their studies. It is, therefore, important for them to develop effective reading comprehension skills and strategies that will enable them to succeed academically, professionally and personally. Given the fact that there is a proliferation of reading materials for all disciplines published in English, the ability to read English fluently is indispensable for Second Language (L2) and Foreign Language (FL) learners to acquire knowledge from the medium of a written text. A close relationship exists between reading skills on the one hand and academic achievement on the other hand. Affirming this view, Adamson (1993), maintains that reading is the most important language skill for high academic achievement, followed by listening comprehension and then writing.

Second and foreign language learners usually face particular reading comprehension challenges when reading academic materials through the medium of a second or foreign language due to lack of exposure to English reading materials outside the classroom. Many students usually see reading as a difficult and daunting task even in

their first languages. From this standpoint, it can be argued that the burden of ESL and EFL learners is twice as much as that of their first language counterpart, as they have to carry out all the academic tasks in a second or foreign language, which, very often, they are still continuing to learn.

Anderson (1999:85) maintains that “a variety of strategies is needed for effective reading”. The same position is held by Koda (2005) who posits that “Reading strategies, or strategic reading are believed to influence readers in adjusting their behaviours to work on text difficulty, task demands, and other contextual variables”. Pimsaru (2009:62) maintains that reading strategies equip students with the necessary skills to handle their reading materials effectively, to understand textual structures, to read for different purposes, and to reflect on their reading. He maintains that once students have developed and utilised their reading strategies, they are more likely to understand the written texts with ease.

Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002: 3) point out that in recent years, there has been significant focus on understanding what proficient, skilled readers typically do while reading (in both L1 and L2), including identifying the types of strategies used, how they are used and the conditions under which the strategies are used (e.g. Cook: 2013 and Li: 2010). Insights from the above research studies have shed some light for first, second and foreign language teachers in supporting their students to become tactical readers.

At the University of Venda, reading is part of the English Communication Skills (ECS) course, a compulsory first-year support pre-requisite course. In the context of the University of Venda, the need for the course is intensified by the fact that most first-year students are second or third language speakers of English who come from ill-

equipped schools and as a result, have poorly developed English language skills. The ECS course curriculum aims to teach all four English language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing; therefore, in terms of an area of reading skill, it is mainly about reading passages and answering for reading comprehension. Thus, explicit reading comprehension strategies or techniques instruction is not the main focus of the course. No official survey and record of the reading strategies utilised by students at the University of Venda has ever been performed, therefore, there is a need to investigate students' awareness of certain reading strategies. This might raise their awareness of reading strategies and help them improve their reading comprehension strategies and provide practical recommendations for enhanced practices in developing reading instruction.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

University of Venda students face reading comprehension challenges when reading academic materials through the medium of a second or foreign language as they are L2 or FL learners of English.

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

The study seeks to raise awareness the reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda in order to promote their academic reading skills and enhance their academic achievement.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are to:

- Explore the reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda.
- Identify other additional reading strategies which can help level-one students at the University of Venda to improve their academic reading skills.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are the research questions underpinning the study:

- What are the reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda?
- To what extent do level one students at the University of Venda use these reading strategies?
- Which other reading strategies can be utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda?

1.7 RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions underpin the study:

- Level-one students at the University of Venda are not aware of reading strategies.
- There is no reading culture among level-one students at the University of Venda due to lack of library facilities in their communities and schools.
- As a result of poor educational background, academic reading becomes a daunting task.

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Below are the definitions of key terms used in this study:

First Language (L1)

First language refers to the language in which an individual has the most highly developed competence, and which he or she is most comfortable using. It is the language that learners take from home to school (home language).

Second language (L2)

Second language refers to the language that is learnt after the home language (the first language) is already entrenched in the learner.

Academic literacy

Academic literacy refers to one's ability to read, write and enumerate effectively within the tertiary institution context in order to proceed from one level to another. In a broader sense, it will imply the students' ability to read, write and numerate within the academic context with independence, understanding and a level of engagement with their learning.

Reading comprehension

The product of constructing meaning by the reader when interacting with the writer through the text.

Reading Strategies

Reading strategies refer to specific techniques or tactics that learners consciously use in order to get comprehension from reading materials or texts (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002).

- **Global Reading Strategies:** these refer to general or global reading strategies that are aimed at setting the stage for the reading act, for example, having a purpose in mind for reading and previewing the text content.
- **Problem-Solving Strategies:** These can be thought of as local, problem-solving, or repair strategies when problems occur for a deeper understanding of the textual information, such as checking for better understanding or re-reading.
- **Support Reading Strategies:** These are supportive tools that are used to maintain responsiveness to reading, for example, taking notes, reading aloud, and using a dictionary.

Survey of reading strategies (SORS)

A Survey of Reading Strategies is a self-report measure of the type and frequency of reading strategies that adolescent and adult ESL students perceive they use while reading academic materials in English (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002).

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings obtained from this study are likely to:

- Provide insight into the comprehension reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda.

- Raise students' awareness of reading strategies and enhance confidence in their own reading ability.
- Assist lecturers to design reading intervention programmes that are informed by the student's reading strategy profiles.
- Be useful to teachers and lecturers in helping their students learn to become constructively responsive and thoughtful readers, which promote skillful academic reading and ultimately enhance academic achievement (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002:6).

1.10 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was delimited to the level-one students studying at the University of Venda in 2016. As the survey of reading strategies is a self-report measure, it was the students' perceptions on what strategies they utilised while reading English academic materials. In other words, the strategies which the students believed they used might not be what they used in actual practice.

1.11 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study of English reading comprehension strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda is divided into the following five chapters:

- Chapter One describes the introduction of the study which consists of the background of the study, introduction and background of the study, statement of the problem, aim of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, definition of key terms, significance of the study, outline of the study and conclusion.
- Chapter Two presents relevant literature on reading.

- Chapter Three explains the research methodology to be implemented in this study.
- Chapter Four presents the results of the study.
- Chapter Five includes the summary of the study findings, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

1.12 CONCLUSION

In the next chapter, review of related literature concerning the theoretical background of reading, the reading process and reading strategies are presented.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the orientation of the study. This chapter reviews the relevant literature related to reading strategies. It covers the following main areas: reading and the reading process, important factors in the reading process, current theories of L2 reading, reading strategies and conclusion.

2.2 IMPORTANCE OF READING IN ESL/EFL CONTEXT

It is important to note that for learners of English, the reading skill in a foreign language is important for a wide range of purposes: education, science, professional success and personal development (Alderson, 1984). Various studies, (for example) (Magogwe, 2013; Shang, 2010; Takallou, 2011) have suggested that reading is the most essential language skill needed by ESL/EFL students for academic achievement. McDonough and Shaw (1993:101) have highlighted the importance of reading as a skill, stating that in many instances around the world it may be argued that reading is the most important foreign language skill. The indications here and below are that EFL learners will benefit greatly by becoming skilled readers.

In English as a Second Language (L2) or Foreign Language (EFL) teaching contexts, reading is considered an important skill not only for obtaining knowledge which is not available in the first language, but also for improving language proficiency in general. Krashen (1985), (for example), suggested that reading more in L2 helps students increase their vocabulary, which, in turn enhances their L2/EFL language proficiency. However, in L2/EFL contexts, learners tend to be confronted with a multiplicity of

reading problems which create major difficulties to their comprehension while reading texts or performing related tasks. One important reason for this may be that the learners concerned are not strategic readers. That is to say, they are not able to recognise processing difficulties or employ strategies to facilitate reading according to the changing purposes and the ongoing monitoring of comprehension (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). In other words, learners do not use effective reading strategies defined for the purposes of this study as mental actions deliberately employed to facilitate a reading process, to enhance reading comprehension and to overcome reading difficulties in order to achieve particular reading goals.

Researchers in the field of L2/EFL have frequently indicated that the use of reading strategies helps learners to solve their reading difficulties and enhance their comprehension; for example, (Cain: 2010; Hudson, 2007; and Block, 1992). The indication is therefore that the utilisation of reading strategies may be an important factor in improving L2/EFL learners' reading capabilities.

Changing theories of the reading process and associated reading models have affected both our understanding of reading and the ways in which reading is taught. Models used by researchers of L2/EFL reading have generally followed descriptions of L1 reading processes. Following the lead of L1 research, some studies in the field of L2/EFL reading, as exemplified in the previous paragraph, have also pointed to the importance of reading strategies to the reading process.

2.3 READING AND THE READING PROCESS

Many scholars have grappled to define and analyse reading in many different ways. The viewpoint of reading varies from individual to individual depending on the individual's attitude and aims towards printed words, from language to language

considering the purpose of reading and the content of the text. Accordingly, the definition of and meaning of reading depend mainly on the purpose of the readers, on the text and textual contents, on the attitude of the readers towards the text, on the reading materials and on the experience and schemata of the reader. Thus, scholars have attempted to define reading differently in their own way of reflection and thought:

According to Shaw (1959: viii), reading is the communication of thoughts, moods and emotions through which one receives 'from others ideas and feelings. According to Goodman, reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game and a repeated process of sampling, predicting, testing and confirming as encapsulated below:

Reading is a selective process. It involves partial use of available minimal language cues selected from perpetual input on the basis of the reader's expectation. As this partial information is processed, tentative decisions are made to be confirmed, rejected or refined as reading progresses (Goodman, 1970: 260).

Rumelhart (1977) posits that reading involves the reader, the text, and the interaction between the two. Readers' engagement in the reading process is based on their past experiences, both in learning how to read and also in the ways reading suits into their lives. He maintains that readers are influenced by their families, educational and social communities around them, the school environment and other social and cultural influences.

Ransom (1978:14 – 15) regards reading as 'a conversation' between the writer and the reader. He pointed out that like someone who is talking, "the writer is trying to convey some message to another person". Widdowson (1979) posits that reading is the "process of getting linguistic information via print". Emerald et al. (1982), maintains

that reading is a conceptual and thinking process through print, and the process is interpretative.

Nuttal (1996: 4) states that reading is the process of “getting out of the text as nearly as possible the message the writer put into it.” Reading is ‘a process’ through which one looks at and understands the written text (Williams, 1996:2), and “comprehension occurs when the reader extracts and integrates various information from the text and combines it with what is already known” (Koda, 2005: 4).

According to Hengari (2007), reading is the ability to make sense of written or printed symbols. It includes word recognition, comprehension and interpretation, appreciation and application of what is read. It is an interaction with language that has been coded into print. Reading performance, good or poor, reflects the knowledge and competencies available to the learner and how these are activated and coordinated during the reading process.

“Reading is an interactive process in two ways. Reading combines many cognitive processes working together at the same time. Reading is also an interaction between the reader and the writer. The text provided information that the author wants to understand in certain ways. The reader also brings a wide range of background knowledge to reading, and she or he actively constructs the meaning of the text by comprehending what the writer intends and by interpreting it in terms of the background knowledge activated by the reader” (Grabe, 2009: 15).

2.4 FACTORS IN THE READING PROCESS

Reading involves a multiplicity of skills and if these skills were to be broken down, an apparently limitless list could be created. Due to the complex nature of reading, many

scholars attempted to understand and explain the fluent reading process by analysing the process into a set of component skills (Carr & Levy, 1990; Haynes & Carr, 1990; Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989). The attempt to subdivide reading into component skills prompted scholars to propose a selection of typical taxonomies as encapsulated underneath by Urquart and Weir (1989: 90):

2.4.1 Davies (1968):

- Identifying word meaning
- Drawing inferences
- Identifying the writer's technique and recognising the mood of the passage
- Finding answers to questions

2.4.2 Lunzer *et al.* (1979):

- Word meaning
- Words in context
- Literal comprehension
- Drawing inferences from single and multiple strings
- Interpretation of metaphor
- Finding salient or main ideas
- Forming judgements

2.4.3 Munby (1978):

- Recognising the script of language
- Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items
- Understanding explicitly or implicitly stated information

- Understanding conceptual meaning
- Understanding the communicative value of sentences and paragraphs
- Understanding relations within a sentence
- understanding relations between parts of texts through lexical cohesion devices
- Interpreting text by going outside it
- Recognising indicators in discourse
- Identifying the main point of information in discourse
- Distinguishing the main idea from detail
- Extracting salient points to summarise the text or a proposition
- Selective extraction of relevant points from a text
- Basic reference skills
- Skimming
- Scanning
- Transcoding information to diagrams and charts.

2.4.4 Grabe (1991)

- Automatic recognition skills
- Vocabulary and structural knowledge
- Formal discourse structure knowledge
- Content/word background knowledge
- Synthesis and evaluation skills
- Metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring

The taxonomy proposed by Grabe (1991) seems to shed more light into the current reading since Grabe did the latest work on reading and he, in the process, summarised

the previous research by other authors. Grabe (1991) came up with the following components as outlined below:

The development of automatic perceptual or identification skills is recognised as important in second language reading (McLaughlin, 1990), but are widely recognised by cognitive psychologists and educational psychologists as central processes in fluent reading. Automaticity occurs when the reader is unaware of the process, not controlling the process, and using little processing capacity (Adams, 1990).

Vocabulary knowledge has come to be acknowledged as a critical feature of reading ability (Koda, 1989). In L1 reading, researchers have estimated recognition vocabularies of fluent readers to range from 10 000 words to 100 000 words (Chall, 1987) whereas in L2 reading, researchers argue for far lower total number of words, often suggesting 2 000 to 7 000 words (Coady, 1983). The need to read fluently, in a manner similar to a good L1 reader, would seem to require knowledge of vocabulary more in line with the larger estimates for L1 readers (Nation, 1990).

Readers need a good knowledge of formal discourse structure. There is substantial evidence that knowing how a text is organised influences the comprehension of the text. For example, good readers appear to make better use of text organisation than poor readers, write better recalls by recognising and using the same organisational structure as the text studied, and, generally, recall information better from certain types of text organisation such as comparison-contrast (Nist & Mealey, 1991).

Content and background knowledge also have a major influence on reading comprehension. Fluent readers do not only seek to comprehend a text when they read, they also evaluate the information from the text and compare/synthesise it with other sources of information/knowledge previously acquired. Thus, synthesis, and

evaluation skills and strategies are critical components of reading abilities (Grabe, 2004).

Metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring is the final important component of fluent reading skills. Metacognitive knowledge may be defined as knowledge about cognition and the self-regulation of cognition (Baker & Brown, 1984). Knowledge about cognition, including knowledge about language, involves recognising patterns of structure and organisation, and using appropriate strategies to achieve specific goals. As related to reading, this would include recognising the more important information in a text; adjusting reading rate; using context to sort out a misunderstood segment; skimming portions of a text; previewing headings, pictures, and summaries; using search strategies for finding specific information; formulating questions about the information; using a dictionary; using word formation and affix information to guess word meanings; taking notes and so forth.

As indicated above, it is evident that a reading component perspective provides important insights into the reading process and is indeed a useful approach for classroom practice.

2.5 THEORIES OF L2 READING

The following three main reading models derived from L1 reading studies are most commonly referred to in order to describe the L2 reading process: bottom-up, top-down and interactive models. For the purpose of this study, focus is put on the interactive model of reading as it combines both bottom-up and top-down processing.

2.5.1 Bottom-up Models

When foreign language readers attempt to read a text with a large number of unfamiliar words, they are more likely to approach the text in an isolated way and disregard the context of the entire text. The bottom-up models, or text-driven approach to reading, hold that the reading process starts from decoding the print on a page and continues as the reader decodes and constructs meaning out of text linearly from the smallest chunks to the largest, and then modifying the prior knowledge on the basis of information provided in the text (Barnett, 1989; Carrell, 1988; Urquarth & Weir, 1989). Grabe and Stoller (2002: 32) argue that “bottom-up models suggest that all reading follows a mechanical pattern in which the reader creates a piece-by-piece mental translation of the information in the text, with little inference from the reader’s own background knowledge”. As a result, the focus is on small chunks of text like letters, words, and sentences instead of the general message of the text as a whole.

Gough’s bottom-up model assumes that the reader begins with letters, converting them into phonemes through decoding. Once the reader recognises the phoneme as a word, he then goes on to the next word, the process continues until the reader recognises all the words in a sentence, at which point he relates the syntactic and semantic rules to give a meaning to the sentence. Finally, he reads the text aloud (Urquarth & Weir, 1998).

The bottom-up views of reading are criticised as a result of their oversight of the reader’s role in the process of meaning construction because they consider reading as a matter of decoding words rather than a process of interacting intelligently with the text to comprehend it in its integrity. Nonetheless, the bottom-up models may shed

some light on the processes that less proficient L2 readers go through and help to detect and treat their reading deficiencies (Barnett, 1989).

2.5.2 Top-down Models

Top-down models give emphasis to the reader's own interpretation of the text and prior knowledge, or schemata (Anderson & Pearson, 1988), in addition to the reader's goals and expectations; hence, they are also referred to as reader-driven models (Barnett, 1989). According to these models, the reader is in a cyclical process of making guesses about the message of the text for confirming them or refuting them based on the reader's prior knowledge or the contextual clues (Goodman, 1968; Urquath & Weir, 1998). While doing this, the reader needs to attend only to the general features and content of the text; therefore, the reader does not have to know all the bits and details contained in the text. In addition, when students make predictions and anticipate content, they are better prepared to make intelligent guesses when they come across unfamiliar words and structures (Barnett, 1989).

Barnett (1989) depicts the theories of Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith as the basis of top-down views of reading which arose during the early seventies. In clarifying Goodman's model of reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game, Barnett holds the view that the readers use sentential and contextual knowledge to compensate for their deficiencies in vocabulary, and go on through four processes in reading; predicting the meanings in the text, reading enough of the text, confirming their guesses or correcting themselves in case they are wrong or there is inadequate information in the text.

More akin to Goodman's predicting reader; Smith's anticipatory reader combines his prior knowledge and his expectations from a certain text with the learned information

from the text (Barnett, 1989). Accordingly, Goodman and Smith give greatest importance to the reader, to his L1 and prior knowledge.

The top-down approach has contributed enormously to explaining the reading process with its emphasis on the reader; nonetheless, it only explains the situation of skilful and fluent L2 readers with a certain level of linguistic proficiency, and it does not paint a true picture of the situation of less proficient language learners. This approach is heavily criticised for its overemphasis on the prediction of meaning at the expense of identifying lexical and grammatical forms (Eskey, 1988; Clark, 1988).

The Interactive Approach to reading, on the other hand, appeared to be a compromise for the dilemma created by the bottom-up and top-down approaches.

2.5.3 Interactive Models

According to the interactive model of reading, interaction might mean two different notions: (i) a general interaction between the reader and the text; that is, the reader uses both textual information and his/her background information to comprehend the information in the text; and (ii) an interaction of both bottom-up and top-down processing working together at the same time in comprehending a text (Grabe, 1991; Carrel, 1988; Eskey, 1988). This means that while the reader decodes the text, he/she uses his/her reading skills based on his/her background information. Likewise, these two acts interact with each other, and occur simultaneously rather than sequentially (Rumelhart, 1997). This provides the reader with the chance to compensate for deficiencies in one aspect for example, vocabulary, by relying more on the other sources for example, background information (Stanovich, 1980). Thus, good readers combine the knowledge of language (grammar and vocabulary) and knowledge of the

world (background knowledge) through the use of reading strategies (Eskey, 1988; Carrel, 1988).

Rumelhart (1977) who is acknowledged to be the originator of the interactive approach to reading suggests that different kinds of information come from various knowledge sources. Mentioning numerous study findings, he draws a conclusion that syntactical, semantic, lexical and orthographic knowledge influence the reader in comprehending a text. “thus, all of the various sources of knowledge, both sensory and non-sensory, come together at one place and the reading process is the product of the simultaneous joint application of all the knowledge sources” (Rumelhart, 1977: 588).

Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978) suggest a semantic model of reading comprehension explaining how semantic structures or propositions are processed for comprehension. This model holds that the reader recreates another text through classifying propositions of the author as relevant or irrelevant, which is seen as indispensable in text comprehension. As a result, the reader’s goals in reading a text are central since they direct the way the text is converted into a new text.

Stanovich (1980), similar to Rumelhart, proposes that reading comprehension occurs on the basis of information flowing simultaneously from various sources, as already mentioned above. Nevertheless, he calls his model an ‘interactive-compensatory’ one, suggesting that a deficiency in one area of knowledge can be compensated for by the strength in another area.

Interactive models of reading provide a more direct description of the reading process of L2 learners. Eskey (1988) maintains that the automatic identification of lexical units and grammatical forms activate the schemata of L2 readers to employ high-level skills to comprehend and interpret a text. “Developing readers must therefore work at

perfecting both their bottom-up recognition skills and their top-down interpretation strategies. Good reading – that is, fluent and accurate reading – can result only from a constant interaction between these processes” (Eskey, 1988: 96). According to Eskey, language knowledge is a kind of schema, which is activated automatically by proficient learners but not others. In other words, information provided by both bottom-up and top-down processing requires background knowledge; thus, non can be disregarded at the expense of the other. As an alternative, information coming from both sources needs to be used interactively, contributing to each other, and eventually leading to reading comprehension.

Bernhardt (1991) classifies three text-driven (bottom-up) and three reader-driven (top-down) factors to clarify the L2 reading process. She lists text-driven factors as word recognition (understanding word meanings), phonemic/graphemic decoding (identifying words with their spelling and pronunciations), and syntactic feature recognition (recognising grammatical relationships among parts of a sentence). Reader-driven factors are intra-textual perception (relating the statements in a text), metacognition (awareness of reader’s own strategies during reading), and prior knowledge (reader’s background knowledge related to the text). These factors overall contribute to successful L2 reading. Bernhardt proposes that text-driven (bottom-up) and reader-driven (bottom-up) processes start interacting as linguistic competence increases, though they appear distinctly at initial phases of linguistic competence.

Bernhardt maintains that language proficiency plays a crucial role in L2 reading in that beginning L2 readers focus on lower-level processing strategies (e.g. word identification), whereas more proficient readers shift attention to more abstract conceptual abilities and make better use of background knowledge; that is, they use

textual information to confirm and predict the information in the text. Along the same lines, Carrel (1988) emphasises the importance of language proficiency for successful L2 reading. Inadequate control over language may lead the reader to heavily rely on background knowledge, which may cause short-circuit, that is, “reading that does not end with meaning” (Goodman, 1988: 17). For that reason, in order to read in an L2, a threshold level of L2 linguistic ability must first be attained.

Another crucial factor in L2 reading within the interactive theory is background knowledge or schemata (Urquhart & Weir, 1998) which is defined as “a reader’s existing concepts about the world” (Barnett, 1989: 42). Carrel (1983) maintains that native speakers utilise top-down and bottom-up processes, and non-native speakers do not process a text in the same way that native speakers do; as an alternative, they process the literal side of the text without making the essential connections between the text and the relevant background knowledge.

The Schema theory for L2 reading holds that readers need to trigger prior knowledge of a topic before they begin to read, and that this activated knowledge enables the reading process (Carrel, 1988). As a result, it is agreed that foreign language students need more than word meanings in order to comprehend a text (Davis & Lyman-Hager, 1997). As confirmed by Davis (1989) in her study, subjects who received background information before reading did better in understanding of a literary text.

Reading strategies play a crucial role in realising successful reading according to the interactive models of L2 reading. Strategies can be defined as “abilities that are potentially open to conscious reflection and use” (Grabe & Stoller, 2002: 17), or more specifically as “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferrable to new

situations” (Oxford, 1990:8). As foreign language learners are also readers in their L1, they are more likely to transfer their available reading strategies when reading L2 texts. Once they reach a certain threshold level, learners can transfer L1 reading strategies, and combine them with newly acquired ones to comprehend the text better. Barnett, 1989 & Carrel 1988) support the claim that using reading strategies enhances reading comprehension. Good reading strategies enable L2 readers to exploit the resources they have for successful reading comprehension. Accordingly, reading strategies activate the background knowledge or the knowledge of the language related to the text being read.

In a nutshell, an interactive approach to reading offers a more developed description of L2 reading as it takes into account the contributions of both lower-level processing skills and high-level comprehension skills as well as processing skills by means of good reading strategies. Proficient readers are able to utilise both bottom-up and top-down processing, and successful comprehension is the result of an interaction and collaboration between both types of processing (Eskey, 1988; Bernhardt, 1991).

2.6 READING STRATEGIES

As indicated earlier in the study, researchers do not share similar views on the definitions of reading. Barnett (1988) defines reading strategies as the tools that are used by the readers when solving problems and acquiring text information. According to Cohen (1990), reading strategies are viewed as the psychological process that a reader consciously uses when doing a reading task. Anderson (1991: 460) holds the view that reading strategies are “cautious and cognitive measures adopted by the reader for acquiring, storing and amending new information”. Tercanioglu (2004) opines that reading strategies are also specific actions, behaviours, steps or

techniques students use to improve their progress in comprehending, initialising and using the foreign language. Oxford (1989) view reading strategies as learning techniques, behaviours, problem-solving or study skills which make learning more effective and efficient.

Although different researchers hold different opinions on the definition of reading, they all agree that reading strategies are conscious actions that the readers take to achieve explicit reading goals. Reading strategies are part of the language learning strategies which are crucial factors of effective reading. All the strategies used by readers, directly or indirectly, in the process of doing reading tasks not only solve the specific comprehension difficulties, but also help in improving their reading comprehension ability.

According to Paris *et al.* (1996), strategic reading is essential to the learners' development and education for the following reasons:

- Strategies allow readers to elaborate, organise and evaluate information derived from text.
- The acquisition of reading strategies coincides and overlaps with the development of multiple cognitive strategies to enhance attention, memory, communication and learning.
- Strategies are personal cognitive tools which can be used selectively, flexibly, and controllably by readers.
- Strategic reading reflects metacognition and motivation because readers need to have both the knowledge and disposition to use strategies.
- Strategies that foster reading and thinking can be taught directly by teachers.
- Strategic reading can enhance learning throughout the curriculum.

2.6.1 Brown's strategies for reading comprehension

Brown (2001: 306 – 310) maintains that reading comprehension is mainly a matter of developing appropriate, efficient comprehension strategies. With this recognition, he synthesised the accumulation of knowledge into ten practical strategies for reading comprehension as outlined below:

(a) Identifying the purpose of reading

(b) Use graphemic rules and patterns to aid in bottom-up decoding, for example:

- (i) Recognise grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, and pluralisation), patterns, rules and elliptical forms.
- (ii) Recognise cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signalling the relationship between and among clauses.
- (iii) Recognise the rhetorical forms of written discourse and their significance for interpretation.

(c) Use efficient silent reading techniques for relatively rapid comprehension, for example:

- (i) Try to visually perceive more than one word at a time, preferably phrases.
- (ii) Unless a word is absolutely crucial to global understanding, skip over it and try to infer its meaning from its context.

(d) Skim the text for main ideas.

Skimming refers to quickly running one's eyes across a whole text for its gist. It makes readers able to predict the purpose of a passage, the main topic, or message, and some of the developing or supporting ideas. This gives them a head start as they embark on more focussed reading.

(e) Scan the text for specific information.

Scanning refers to quickly searching for some particular piece or pieces of information in a text. Its purpose is to extract specific information without reading through the whole text.

(f) Use semantic mapping or clustering.

Semantic mapping or clustering refers to grouping ideas or a long string of ideas or events into meaningful clusters. It helps the reader to provide some order to chaos.

(g) Guess when you are not certain.

Learners can use guessing to their advantage to:

- (i) Guess the meaning of a word
- (ii) Guess a grammatical relationship (e.g., a pronoun reference)
- (iii) Guess a discourse relationship
- (iv) Infer implied meaning
- (v) Guess about a cultural reference
- (vi) Guess content messages

(h) Analyse vocabulary

Several techniques are useful here:

- (i) Look for prefixes that may give clues
- (ii) Look for suffixes what may indicate what part of speech it is
- (iii) Look for roots that are familiar
- (iv) Look for grammatical contexts that may signal information
- (v) Look at semantic context (topic) for clues

(i) Distinguish between literal and implied meanings.

It is believed that not all languages can be interpreted appropriately by attending to its literal, syntactic surface structure which makes special demands on readers. Implied meaning usually has to be derived from processing pragmatic information.

(j) Capitalise on discourse markers to process relationships

Many discourse markers in English signal relationships among ideas as expressed through phrases, clauses and sentences.

2.6.2 Stages of developmental reading growth

Duffy and Roehler (1993) posit that comprehension is the most important process goal of reading. To achieve this goal, they proposed three types of comprehension strategies at each stage of developmental reading growth. Within the framework of monitoring, comprehension strategies can be described in terms of strategies readers employ as they begin to read (initiating strategies for predicting meaning), as they are in the midst of reading (during-reading strategies for removing blockages), and when reflecting on meaning after reading (post-reading strategies for extracting meaning). All these strategies are metacognitive, that is: being conscious of when and how to use them so the readers can access them when reading text on their own.

2.6.2.1 Initiating strategies

When the readers initially encounter text, they immediately become strategic. They examine the text for clues about its meaning, and they predict what the content will be all about. In other words, initiating strategies focus on what readers think about to make predictions as they begin to read.

There are three sources of clues for making predictions in the selection. One is the topic clues which are often found in a selection's title, in its picture, or in the first or second paragraph. A second source is text clues. Different text types, such as humorous tales, a geography book, or a poetry book, and different internal text structure, such as a story, an expository, article, a poem, or some other kind of text, stir different expectations to predict what will happen in the selection. A third source of clues for making initial predictions is the purpose for reading the text. Different purposes shape different expectations or meaning depending on what you are looking for.

2.6.2.2 During-reading strategies

It is generally believed that no matter how strategic a reader is when initiating reading, some predictions may prove to be inaccurate. During-reading strategies are used to regulate the on-going process of getting meaning, that is, the readers monitor emerging meaning to determine whether initial predictions were accurate, and if they were not, they use fix-it strategies to generate new predictions that fit the new information. The reasoning involved in accomplishing this regulatory function includes monitoring, accessing appropriate strategies, reasoning with the strategies, forming a new prediction, and testing the new prediction.

2.6.2.3 Post-reading strategies

It is believed that meaning getting is not complete when a reader finishes the last words in a text and that some of the significant comprehension occurs after reading is completed. There are two types of post-reading strategies: first, organising or reconstructing strategies including summarising, drawing conclusions about an

author's main idea or theme; second, evaluative strategies including evaluating or making judgements or doing critical reading about an author's message.

2.6.3 Reading strategy checklist

The "Reading strategy Checklist" which contains 24 common reading strategies which have been broken down into three groups was developed based on research by Anderson (1999: 82 -83):

2.6.3.1 Cognitive Reading Strategies

- (a) Predicting the content of an upcoming passage or section of the text.
- (b) Concentrating on grammar to help you understand unfamiliar constructions.
- (c) Understanding the main idea to help you comprehend the entire reading.
- (d) Expanding your vocabulary and grammar to help you increase your reading.
- (e) Guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words or phrases to let you use what you already know about English.
- (f) Analysing theme, style, and connections to improve your comprehension.
- (g) Distinguishing between opinions and facts in your reading.
- (h) Breaking down larger phrases into smaller parts to help you understand difficult passages.
- (i) Linking what you know in your first language with words in English.
- (j) Creating a map or drawing of related ideas to enable you to understand the relationship between words and main ideas.
- (k) Writing a short summary of what you read to help you understand the main idea.

2.6.3.2 Metacognitive Reading Strategies

- (a) Setting goals for yourself to help you improve areas that are important to you.

- (b) Making lists of relevant vocabulary to prepare for new reading.
- (c) Working with classmates to help you develop your reading skills.
- (d) Taking opportunities to practice what you already know to keep your progress steady.
- (e) Evaluating what you have learned and how well you are doing to help focus your reading.

2.6.3.3 Compensating Reading Strategies

- (a) Relying on what you already know to improve your reading comprehension.
- (b) Taking notes to help you recall important details.
- (c) Trying to remember what you understand from reading to help you develop better comprehension skills.
- (d) Reviewing the purpose and tone of a reading passage so you can remember more effectively.
- (e) Picturing scenes in your mind to help you remember and understand your reading.
- (f) Reviewing key ideas and details to help you remember.
- (g) Using physical action to help you remember information you have read.
- (h) Classifying words into meaningful groups to help you remember them more clearly.

Apart from the knowledge of Reading Strategy Checklist above, Anderson (1999:4) developed eight teaching strategies for second language reading classes which was named ACTIVE: activate prior knowledge; cultivate vocabulary; teach for comprehension; increase reading rate; verify reading strategies, evaluate progress; build motivation; and plan for instruction and select appropriate reading materials.

Reading strategies are especially important for language learning because they are the tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing

communication ability (Aktein & Guven, 2007). It is therefore, important for ESL and EFL teachers and lecturers to be aware of the reading strategies utilised by their students to make meaning and to build upon those strategies over time and as the text becomes more complex.

2.6.4 Sources of difficulty in ESL and EFL reading

As pointed out in the preceding discussion about factors in the reading process and reading strategies, the difficulties that ESL/EFL learners encounter when reading academic materials in English emanate from a multiplicity of sources which are not so easy to identify and classify. Some of the difficulties may emanate from learner factors such as lack of sufficient competence in L2 and poor or incorrect use of reading strategies. Other factors may emanate from text features such as content, length, linguistic complexity and organisational pattern.

According to Yorio (1971), reading difficulties are largely due to imperfect knowledge of language and language interference in the reading process. It is suggested that reading involves knowledge of language, ability to predict and remember the previous cues and ability to make associations between different cues previously selected. The research findings from the study conducted by Pardon and Waxman (1988) reveal that besides students' level of ESL/EFL, the use of the wrong cognitive strategies interferes with their level of comprehension.

Another study which directly confronts the question of whether reading in a second language or foreign language depends on reading skills or on the level of proficiency is that of Carrel (1991). The study posits that both aspects directly affect reading ability, a conclusion akin to the one reached by Bernhardt and Kamil (1995) when they claim that language ability is a major determinant of successful reading. The same

sentiment is echoed by Devine (1984) who posits that when there is language deficiency, readers are not able to utilise syntactic, contextual, semantic and discourse clues. Aebersold & Field (1997) claim that researchers in L2 reading generally agree that unsuccessful readers lack the following types of reading behaviour which are exhibited by more proficient readers:

- (a) Overviewing text before reading
- (b) Employing contextual clues such as titles, subheadings and diagrams
- (c) Looking for more important information while reading and paying greater attention to that information
- (d) Attempting to relate important points in a text to another in order to understand the text as a whole
- (e) Activating and using prior knowledge to interpret text
- (f) Reconsidering and revising hypothesis about the meaning of text based on text content
- (g) Inferring information from text to determine the meaning of unknown words
- (h) Monitoring text comprehension
- (i) Identifying main ideas and using strategies to remember text like paraphrasing, summarising and making notes
- (j) Understanding relations between parts of text and recognising text structure
- (k) Changing reading strategies when comprehension is perceived not to be proceeding smoothly
- (l) Evaluating the qualities of text, and reflecting on and processing each part at intervals.
- (m) Anticipating or planning for the use of knowledge gained from the reading.

According to Singhal (2001) reading strategies, metacognitive awareness and reading proficiency are closely related. Successful readers seem to use more strategies than less successful readers and also seem to use them more frequently. Better readers also have an enhanced metacognitive awareness of their own use of strategies and what they know, which leads to greater and improved reading ability and also proficiency in language.

Vocabulary knowledge has been identified as a critical component of reading comprehension and as an important predictor of reading ability Ulijn and Salager-Meyer (1998). Coady (1993) maintains that readers with better vocabulary knowledge are believed to be better 'comprehenders' and vice-versa. Grabe (1991) asserts that most L1 and L2 reading theories hold that processing at the word level is important to successful reading and that lack of skill at recognising words is almost always a predictor of difficulties in developing reading comprehension. Similarly, automatic word identification is now considered as one of the most striking differences between skilled and less skilled readers. This is confirmed by Perfetti (1995) when he states that fast context-free word identification and rich context dependent text understanding are the hallmarks of skilled reading.

Lack of appropriate schema or background knowledge has also been proven to be another barrier to ESL/EFL readers' comprehension of authentic texts. As pointed out earlier on, according to the schema-theoretic view (Anderson and Pearson, 1984), reading is a top-down and bottom-up interactive process and readers' background knowledge plays a pivotal role in comprehension. Prevailing knowledge interacts with new knowledge in comprehending a text. Pursuant to the Schema Theory, a number of studies investigated the importance of background knowledge in second language

reading. The study by Johnson (1981) found that a match between background knowledge presupposed by the text and that possessed by the readers leads to a better comprehension than a mismatch. Other studies indicate that providing students with background facilitates learning and understanding of unfamiliar texts (Johnson, 1982). Chan (2003) found that both background knowledge and language proficiency affect L2 reading and pointed out that background knowledge is more beneficial to low proficiency readers than high proficiency readers. According to Chan (2003), background knowledge is less important than language proficiency in L2.

The way in which the text content is organised and explained, that is, its level of coherence, and similarly, how skilled the reader is in seeing the organisational pattern in different genres of L2 text may be another source of difficulty or influence on the reader's ability to acquire information from an L2 text. The notion of coherence has been used to describe the kind of textual organisation that facilitates the reader's task. Coherence is brought to text by the readers who depend on their world knowledge when perceiving the fundamental associations that make up the elements of a text (Ulijn & Salager-Meyer, 1998).

Van Dijk (1977) identifies two types of coherence: global (macro-level) and local (micro-level). Global deals with the overall structure and order of propositions in a text whereas local is related to the inter-sentential relations. He claims that coherence also depends on the readers' view of the 'textual world', which embraces extra linguistic elements like the writer's intention, the nature of the audience addressed, the relationship that exists between the reader and the writer. MacKeon et al. (1992) posit that greater textual coherence can compensate for some knowledge gaps, and that background knowledge is most advantageous if a text is coherent enough to allow the

reader to see the connections between the information in the text and the reader's previous knowledge. Spooren and Hoeken (1998), in their study on the role of interest and text structure, concluded that the result of structure on the reading process was much more noticeable than that of interest. They also pointed out that text structure is an essential support to an L2 reader to learn about relatively uninteresting (boring) as well as interesting topics.

According to Clyne (1991), the discourse patterns employed in academic texts are culturally determined and that the broad organisation of texts produced by English speaking scholars differs from texts produced by, for argument sake, German scholars. Wallace (1992) argues that since discourses are socially determined and culture-specific, readers from different socio-cultural backgrounds from that of the writer may find the meaning of even apparently simple texts obscure. This might mean that L2 readers will automatically have somewhat more difficulty reading and comprehending a text in L2. Ulijn & Salager-Meyer (1998) maintain that there is enough evidence that native culture affects the discourse of texts written for academic and professional purposes. That is why L2 readers in academic setting will have to deal with such cultural differences in reading academic authentic texts in a foreign language.

Reading in L2 is not a monolingual event given that L2 readers usually have access to their L1 during the reading process, and many readers use it as a strategy, one of which is mental translation, to comprehend an L2 text. Kern (1994) studied the role of mental translation as a cognitive strategy in L2 reading comprehension process using verbal report interviews. His findings were that this strategy was frequently used by the respondents to understand L2 texts and seemingly served the functional purpose

of facilitating the construction and conservation of meaning; it was called on especially when the readers needed to respond to specific barriers to comprehension such as unfamiliar vocabulary and structure. Through their study of mental translation in L1, Upton and Lee-Thompson (2001) concluded that the role of L1 goes far beyond merely serving as a linguistic 'decoder ring'. They opined that the use of L1 by L2 readers to help them cope with word and sentence level problems, confirm comprehension, predict text structure and content as well as monitor text characteristics and reading behaviour, supports a sociocultural view of language as a tool of thought. They also confirmed the notion of Kern (1994) proving that the difficulty in thinking about difficult concepts and ideas in L2 places an extra burden on memory and comprehension processes, that is why L2 readers switch to their L1 to think about what they are reading. Nonetheless, the higher the proficiency was, the lower the amount of cognitive reliance on L1. Similarly, supportive use of L1 decreased as the proficiency level increased and then levelled off.

Another cause of difficulty in L2 reading emanates from weaker second language learners who worry about not understanding each word of the input. They focus a lot of attention at word level and this occupies much working memory capacity, thus preventing them from building the words into higher level meaning. This view is supported by Clarke (1980) who asserts that the attention of lower-level readers is so focused upon decoding that they are unable to transfer into L2 the kind of higher-level processing that comes naturally to them in the native language. The same view is also shared by Gernsbacher (1990) when he suggests that it is a characteristic of less skilled readers that they build small-scale units of meaning and are unable to integrate these units into larger ones.

2.6.5 Reading strategies used by proficient readers

Edward (2009), proposed the following six reading strategies used by proficient readers:

2.6.5.1 Making Connections

There are three types of connections: first, text-to-self, a connection readers make between the text and their past experiences; second, text-to text, a connection which readers make between the text they are reading and another text; and third, text-to-world, a connection readers make between text and the issues, events, or concerns of society and the world at large. It is believed that when readers have had an experience similar to that of a character in a story, they are more likely to understand the character's motives, thoughts and feelings. This strategy is related to prior knowledge and schema theory.

2.6.5.2 Asking Questions

Questioning is the strategy that propels readers forward. When readers have questions, they are less likely to abandon the text. Readers ask questions to: construct meaning; enhance understanding; find answers; solve problems; find specific information; discover new information; propel research efforts; and clarify confusion. Proficient readers ask questions before, during and after reading.

2.6.5.3 Visualising

Visualising enables readers to make the words on the page real and concrete. When readers visualise, their level of engagement increases and their attention does not flag. In addition, it allows the readers to create mental images; enhances meaning

with mental imagery; links past experiences to the text, enables readers to place themselves in the story; strengthens a reader's relationship to the text; stimulates imaginative thinking; heightens engagement with text; and brings joy to reading.

2.6.5.4 Making Inferences

Inferring is the cornerstone of comprehension. It allows readers to “read between the lines”, to make their own discoveries without the direct comment of the author. If readers do not infer, they will not grasp the deeper meaning of the text. When readers infer, they draw conclusions based on clues in the text; make predictions before and during reading; surface underlying themes; use implicit information from the text to create meaning during and after reading; and use the pictures to help gain meaning.

2.6.5.5 Determining Important Ideas

The ability to determine importance in the text often requires readers to use related comprehension strategies. Readers may have to infer the lesson or moral in a fairy tale or summarise the information in a science text. What they determine to be important depends on the purpose of reading. When determining importance, readers learn new information and build background knowledge; distinguish what is important from what is interesting; discern a theme, opinion, or perspective; answer a specific question; and determine the author's message: inform, persuade, or entertain.

2.6.5.6 Synthesising Information

Synthesising allows readers to make sense of important information and move on. It requires the readers to sift and sort through large amounts of information to extract the overall meaning. When readers synthesise, they stop and collect their thoughts before reading on; sift important ideas from less important ones; summarise the

information by briefly identifying the main points; combine these main points into a bigger idea; make generalisation and/or judgements about the information they read; and personalise their reading by combining new information with prior knowledge to form a new idea, opinion and perspective.

In 1987, Rubin (as cited in Alderson, 2001: 309) cited a strategy research in reading of Cindy: How to be a Successful Contextual Guesser undertaken by Hosenfield who identifies contextual guessing as distinguishing successful from unsuccessful second-language readers. Some strategies identified in Hosenfield's study of Cindy were as follows:

- (a) Keep the meaning of a passage in mind while reading and use it to predict meaning.
- (b) Skip unfamiliar words and guess their meaning from remaining words in a sentence or later sentences.
- (c) Circle back in the text to bring to mind previous context to decode an unfamiliar word.
- (d) Identify the grammatical function of an unfamiliar word before guessing its meaning.
- (e) Examine the illustration and use information contained in it in decoding.
- (f) Read the title and draw inferences from it.
- (g) Refer to the side gloss.
- (h) Recognise cognates.
- (i) Use knowledge of the world to decode an unfamiliar word.
- (j) Skip words that may add relatively little to total meaning

Thomson's study (as cited in Alderson, 2001: 310) listed reading strategies with an emphasis on the important effects of background knowledge and the rhetorical structure of the text on processing. He also pointed out that these strategies could lead to efficient L2 reading. These strategies are:

- a) Identifying text structure, via a flow-chart or a hierarchical summary;
- b) Providing titles before reading;
- c) Using embedded headings as advanced organisers;
- d) Pre-reading questions;
- e) Generation of story-specific schema from general problem solving schema for short stories (questions readers ask themselves);
- f) Use of visual imagery;
- g) Reading a story from the perspective of different people or participants.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Literature reviewed in this chapter indicates that reading strategies are neither taught nor learnt in isolation, but are orchestrated based on the purpose of reading or studying. It therefore implies that in order to achieve effective reading, the learners need to be exposed to a variety of strategies and explicitly taught some that they do not know about and how to evaluate the effectiveness of strategy use. Strategic reading requires not only knowing what strategy to use, but also knowing how to use a strategy successfully and orchestrate its use with other strategies. Good readers know how to abandon non-successful strategies and select new ones, how to re-deploy old strategies, and how to combine those that seem to work best in the

particular interpretation process at hand. The next chapter presents the research methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research design and procedures that were used in this study. According to Patton (2001), methodology is regarded as a more practical philosophy of science that deals with methods, systems, and rules for the conduct of an inquiry. The chapter consists of the following topics: research design, population and sample, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis.

3.2 RESEARCH SITE

The study was conducted at the University of Venda which is situated in the Vhembe District Municipality in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. The University of Venda is located in Thulamela Local Municipality which is within the Vhembe District municipality in Thohoyandou Town (see Figure 3.1).

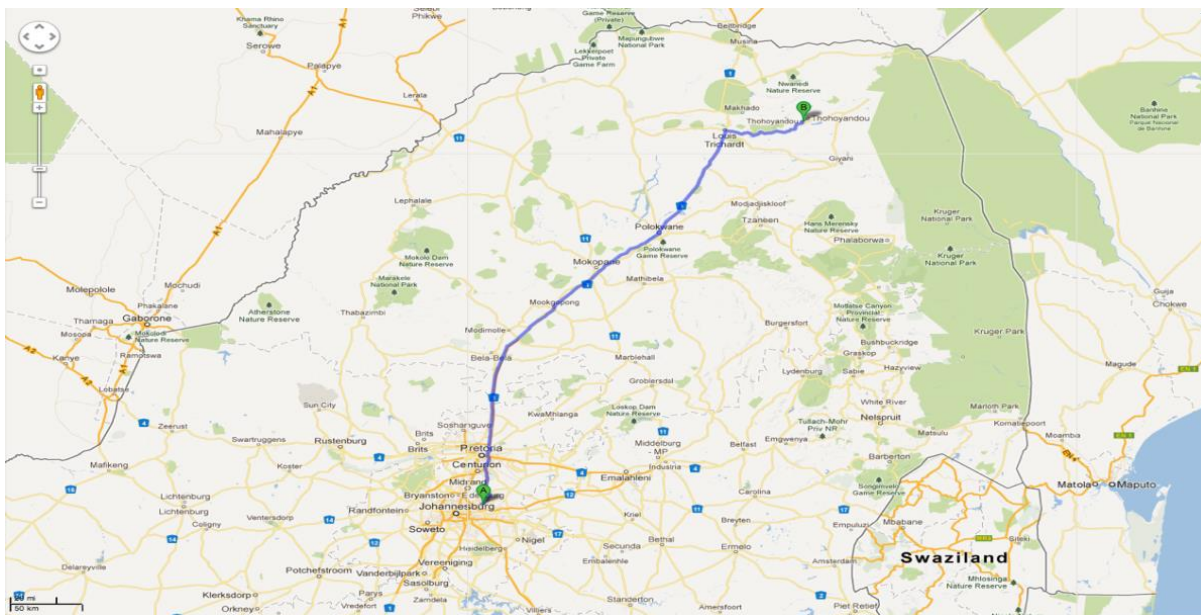


Figure 3.1: A map of Thohoyandou

<http://physics.uj.ac.za/conferences/2013/HDM2013/images/Map-Jhb-Venda.png>

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is defined as a plan of how the research would be conducted, indicating who or what is involved, where and when the study will take place (Du Plooy, 2002). According to De Vos *et al.* (2005), a research design refers to the option that is available for researchers to study certain phenomenon according to certain formulae suitable for a specific topic. Punch (2005) posits that a research design is the strategy, the conceptual framework, the question of who or what to be studied, the tools to be used for collecting and analysing empirical material. Similarly, Leedy and Ormrod (2010) hold the view that a research design is often referred to as a strategic plan for a research project, setting out the broad outline and key features of the work to be undertaken, including the methods of data collection and analysis to be employed and showing how the research strategy addresses the specific aim and objectives of the study. This means that the function of a research design is ensuring that the evidence enables the researcher to answer initial questions as unambiguously as possible.

This study adopted a mixed methods research design (quantitative and qualitative research approaches). A Mixed methods design is regarded as a research strategy that crosses the boundaries of conventional paradigms of research by deliberately combining methods drawn from different traditions, with different underlying assumptions (Creswell, 2009) as cited in (Mulaudzi, 2013). A mixed methods research design focuses on the collection, analysis and mixing of both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or series of studies to provide a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell, 2006:5).

I adopted a mixed method research design in this study as I used a quantitative method for research questions one and two, and a qualitative method for research question three. It is important to note that quantitative methods are research techniques that are used to gather quantitative data - information dealing with numbers and anything that is measurable (Nunan, 2001:87-92). In other words, quantitative methods are a systematic process in which numerical data are controlled and measured to address the accumulation of facts and then utilised to obtain information about the world.

For research questions one and three, I found a quantitative research design to be appropriate because it is statistically reliable and allows results to be analysed and compared with similar studies. Kruger (2003:18-19) also confirms that “quantitative methods allow us to summarise [vast] sources of information and facilitate comparisons across categories and over time”. The aim of the study was to systematically investigate the reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda.

For research question 3, I found a qualitative design appropriate. Yates (2004) posits that qualitative research attempts to achieve in-depth understanding and detailed description of a particular aspect of an individual, a case history or a group’s experience. Qualitative research might also aim to explore the way people give meaning to and express their understanding of themselves, their experiences or their words (Yates, 2004). Nyawaranda 2003 maintains that qualitative research focuses on understanding an individual’s perception of the world from his or her own frame of reference since truth or reality is that which people imagine it to be. Creswell (2005)

outlines the following advantages related to the blending of qualitative and quantitative research designs:

- The mixed methods research provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative research;
- Mixed method research helps answer questions that cannot be answered qualitatively or quantitatively alone;
- Mixed methods provide more comprehensive evidence for studying a research problem than either qualitative or quantitative alone.
- Mixed method research encourages the use of the multiple worldviews or paradigms rather than the typical association of certain paradigms for quantitative research and others for qualitative research.

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

A target population is a group of people about whom the researcher has an interest. Such a group should share a given set of characteristics about which the researcher wishes to draw conclusions (Cardwell, Clark, & Meldrum, 2004: 642). According to De Vos et al. (2005: 269) population refers to a total set from which individuals or units of the study are chosen. Barbie and Mouton (2001) regard population as the group of people about whom we want to draw conclusions.

For this study, the population comprised level-one students who were registered at the University of Venda in 2016.

Sampling is a process of selecting units from a population of interest so that by studying them one may fairly generalise the results back to the population from which they were chosen (Williams, 2006: 11). Kumar (1999:48) views sampling as the process of selecting a few (sample) from a bigger group (the sampling population) to

become the basis for estimating or predicting a fact, situation or outcome regarding the bigger group. According to Neumann (2011), a sample opens up new theoretical insights; reveals distinctive aspects or social settings or deepens understanding of complex situations, events or relationship. Usually, the population will be too large for the researcher to attempt to study all its members, so a small but carefully chosen sample can be used to represent it and reflect the characteristics of those from which it is drawn. Therefore, a sample should be selected to represent the whole population. A sample is a sub-group of the respondents available to the researcher.

For this study, simple random sampling was used to select the three hundred and fifty level-one students at the University of Venda to participate in the study.

3.5 INSTRUMENTATION

Collection of data is a systematic process in which the researcher collects relevant information to achieve the research's purpose and objectives (Burns & Grove, 2005). The data were gathered using a questionnaire. According to Godwin and Harry (2009: 1), a questionnaire is a set of systematically-structured questions used by a researcher to get needed information from respondents. A questionnaire is any written instrument that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from existing answers. Questionnaires may be self-administered, posted or presented in an interview format. They may include checklists, attitude scales, projective techniques, rating scales and a variety of other research methods. As an important research instrument and a tool for data collection, a questionnaire has its main function as an instrument.

MacMillan and Schumacher (2010: 195) highlight the point that for many good reasons, questionnaires are the most widely used technique for obtaining information

from subjects. According to Leedy (2010: 1) a questionnaire is a well-established tool within social science research for acquiring information on participants' social characteristics, present and past behaviour, standards of behaviour or attitude and their beliefs and reasons for action. Questionnaires are popular and fundamental tools for acquiring information on knowledge and perception.

Leedy (2010) posits that the principal requirement of questionnaire format is that questions are sequenced in a logical order, allowing a smooth transition from one topic to the next. This will ensure that participants understand the purpose of research and will be able to answer all the questions carefully. This can be accomplished by grouping related questions under a short heading describing the section's theme. Researchers must decide on question response format, that is, whether to include closed questions, open question or both. There is debate on the use of open and closed questions within social research. Closed questions are typically difficult to construct but easy to analyse whereas open questions are easy to construct but difficult to analyse. Closed questions are often used within quantitative research while open questions are used within qualitative research (Leedy, 2010)

According to Brink et al. (2013: 153), questionnaires have the following strength:

- They are a quick way of obtaining data from a large group of people
- They are less expensive in terms of time and money
- They are one of the easiest research instruments to test reliability and validity
- Participants feel a greater sense of anonymity and are more likely to provide honest answers
- The format is standard for all participants and is not dependent on the mood of the interviewer.

The research instrument in this study was a questionnaire which was divided into three sections:

Section 1

The first section of the questionnaire was designed to ask the participants' biographical information regarding their gender, age, school, and number of years in university.

Section 2

The second section of the questionnaire was adapted from the "Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS)" which was developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). It was planned to survey the regularity with which the participants used reading strategies described in each statement when reading English academic materials. The SORS consists of thirty (30) items which measure the three sub-categories of reading strategies:

- (a) Global Reading Strategies (13 items): these refer to general or global reading strategies that are aimed at setting the stage for the reading act, for example, having a purpose in mind for reading and previewing the text content.
- (b) Problem-Solving Strategies (8 items): These can be thought of as local, problem-solving, or repair strategies when problems occur for a deeper understanding of the textual information, such as checking for better understanding or re-reading.
- (c) Support Reading Strategies (9 items): These are supportive tools that are used to maintain responsiveness to reading, for example, taking notes, reading aloud, and using a dictionary.

Each of the items uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from five (5) to one (1): a score of five (5) means the strategy was always used, a score of four (4) means it was often used, a score of three (3) means it was sometimes used, a score of two (2) means it was rarely used, and a score of one (1) means it was never used.

Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) provided a key to interpreting the mean for each item and overall item ratings of the SORS. They considered a mean of below 2.5 as low usage, a mean of 2.5 to 3.4 as moderate and a mean of 3.5 to 5.0 as high. The researcher used the same rating to interpret the frequency of item means in the present study.

Section 3:

The third section of the questionnaire consists of open-ended section created to ask the participants if there is any other reading strategy used which is not included in the questionnaire.

3.6 PROCEDURES

Prior to being used as the main research instrument, the questionnaires were tried out with five (5) level-one students from the same group in the same academic year at the University of Venda to ensure reliability and validity – in order to ascertain if the participants understood the instructions and statements mentioned in the questionnaire. The pilot study was conducted at the university before the main survey was undertaken.

All the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents during the English Communication Skills (ECS) class. The researcher informed the participants of the purpose of the study and the requirement of the survey and then asked them to

provide honest responses. The respondents were asked to indicate the reading strategies they utilised, and filled in their personal information and other reading strategies they utilised. All the questionnaires were collected once the participants had completed them.

To find the average score of the participants' perceived use of reading strategies, the researcher summarised the scores from individual strategies and transferred all of them to the scoring sheet. The scores were then added up in each column to obtain a total score for the entire instrument as well as for each strategy subscale (for example, global reading, problem-solving, and support reading strategies).

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the process of resolving data into its constituent components so as to reveal characteristic elements and structure (Dey, 1993). According to Babbie (2011: 422), the aim of data analysis is the discovery of patterns among the data, patterns that point to a theoretical understanding of social life.

Data from the first and second part of the questionnaire were analysed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) PC programme to compute the descriptive statistics as follows:

- Biographical information in section 1 was analysed using frequency and percentage.
- Frequency use of each reading strategy in section 2 was analysed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and usage level.

Data from the third section of the questionnaire, which was on other reading strategies the participants used, was interpreted and summed up using grouping technique.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:537), qualitative research analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of the data in terms of the participants' definition of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. In the current study, I used an inductive analysis, which entailed 'discovering patterns, themes and categories in one's data' (Patton cited in Marshall and Rossman, 2006:159).

The first step was to organise the data in line with Deem's (2002: 846) observation that for the qualitative researcher to make sense out of the data, there is need 'to impose some form of order onto this data.'

After organising the data, I subjected it to the process of reading and memoing, a process of that involves immersing oneself in the details, writing notes in margins of notepads (Creswell, 2013). After reading and re-reading the data, I classified the data into codes and themes as Creswell (2013, 184) puts it, "forming codes or categories represents the heart of qualitative analysis. Here researchers build detailed descriptions, develop themes or dimensions, and provide an interpretation in light of their own views or views of perspectives in literature.'

To classify the themes, I looked at important information from the data in line with the third research question, 'Which other reading strategies are also utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda?' Creswell (2013: 186) states that themes in qualitative research (also called categories) are broad units of information that consists of several codes aggregated to form common ideas. I therefore, looked for common ideas or themes with regard to any other reading strategies in English reading comprehension that the students utilised apart from the thirty items that were listed in Section 2 of the questionnaire. I used the constant comparative method of

data analysis, which entails comparing and contrasting data from different sources so as to develop categories and seek pattern among the categories (Silverman, 2012).

The next step in my data analysis was to interpret data. Marshall and Rossman (2006: 161 -162) posit that data interpretation in qualitative research is a process that brings meaning and coherence to themes, patterns, categories, developing linkages and story line that is engaging to read. In the same way, Creswell (2013) holds that data interpretation in qualitative research involves abstracting out beyond the codes and themes, to the larger meaning of the gathered data.

The last step was to present the data. Creswell (2013: 187), asserts that presenting or representing the data is a packaging of what was found in the text, tabular or figure form. I then adopted a descriptive and interpretative mode of data presentation using my own words and own interpretations, through detailed descriptions, quotes and descriptive statistics where necessary. This is supported by Best and Khan (2014: 299) who posit that qualitative studies are those in which the description of observations is not ordinarily expressed in quantitative terms. It is not that numerical measures are never used by that other means of description are emphasised.

The data analysis process as outlined above is consistent with the phases of qualitative research suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2006), that is, organising the data, immersing oneself in the data by reading and re-reading it, generating categories and themes, coding the data, offering interpretations, searching for alternative understandings, and then presenting the findings.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics are concerns, dilemmas and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct a research. They define what is or not legitimate to do or what moral procedure is (Neumann, 2011). According to Barbie and Mouton (2011), ethics in research refer to a general obligation for researchers to conduct their craft in a socially responsive and responsible manner. It is crucial that researchers integrate ethics in the their research in order to avoid harm to the participants as well as to ensure that the participants take part in the research with full awareness of the purpose, risks and benefits of the research.

Firstly, the researcher was granted an ethical clearance to conduct the study by the University of Venda Research Ethics Committee. It was essential for the researcher to follow and abide by ethical guidelines throughout the entire research process. The researcher strictly adhered to the following ethical principles:

3.8.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

According to Piper and Simons (2006: 56), those interviewed or observed should give their permission in full knowledge of the purpose of the research and the consequences that taking part in it would have for them. Kumar (2005) holds that subjects should be made adequately aware of the kind of information that the researcher wants from them, why the information is being sought, what purpose it will be put to and how they are expected to participate in the study as well as , how it will directly or indirectly affect them. Informed consent is an important aspect of showing respect and dignity to participants; it is also an important aspect of maintaining cordial power relations between the researcher and the researched.

Prior to taking part in the study, the participants were presented with a consent form in which the research process was described in detail. At that stage, participants were requested to read the form, ask questions to obtain clarity and sign the consent form if they were willing to take part in the study. Participants were repeatedly reminded of their right to withdraw at any time if they wished to do so.

3.8.2 Protection from harm

An important principle to be adhered to is that the researcher should never injure the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study or not (Mouton, 2001: 522). In this study, the researcher strove to be honest, respectful and considerate towards all participants and gave a clear explanation of the confidentiality of the results and findings of the study.

3.8.3 Confidentiality

In this study, participants were assured that the research process would be confidential and that the anonymity of the individuals would be guaranteed as the participants would not write down their names in the questionnaire.

3.8.4 Validity and Reliability

The data of this study were collected through students' questionnaires adapted from the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) which was developed to measure the metacognitive awareness and perceived use of reading strategies of adolescent and adult learners of English as a second language (ESL) while reading academic texts. SORS is used as a standard instrument because it was field-tested extensively using large and diverse sample population representing students with equivalent reading abilities ranging from middle school to college by

Mokhtari and Reichard (2002). The internal consistency reliability coefficient for its subscales (metacognitive, cognitive and support strategies) ranged from 0.89 to 0.93 and was found to have well-established validity and reliability data (Alpha = .93) (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). In addition, factor analysis of the strategy is confirmed by many studies (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; Oxford, 1996; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995).

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the methodology of the study, showing the research site, the research design, population and sample, instrumentation, procedures, data analysis, ethical considerations and validity and reliability.

In the next chapter, the findings derived from the analysis of the collected data from questionnaires are reported in response to the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research findings of the reading strategies utilised by the level-one students at the University of Venda. The research findings are divided into three parts based on the data from the questionnaire.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

A total of 350 students participated in this study initially. After screening the data, a total of 309 (82.29%) cases were used for data analysis. There were four items in relation to the biographical information that the students had to respond to: gender, age, school and number of years in university. The findings were as follows:

Table 4.1: Biographical information of the respondents

Biographical Information		Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	143	46.3
	Female	166	53.7
Age	17	4	1.3
	18	65	2.1
	19	88	28.5
	20	74	23.9
	21	39	12.6
	22	18	5.8

	23	6	1.9
	24	3	1.0
	25	2	0.6
	26	2	0.6
	27	1	0.3
	28	1	0.3
	29	1	0.3
	30	2	0.6
	31	1	0.3
	32	1	0.3
	35	1	0.3
School	Agriculture	3	1.0
	Education	57	18.4
	Environmental Sciences	12	3.9
	Health Sciences	38	12.3
	Human and Social Sciences	86	27.8
	Law	22	7.1
	Management Sciences	58	18.8
	Mathematical and Natural Sciences	32	10.4
No. of years in University	1	309	100

As shown in Table 4.1 and Fig. 4.1, the respondents consisted of 143 males (46.3%) and 166 females (53.7%). Their ages ranged from 17 to 35 years old. Majority of the respondents were 19 years old (88 students, 28.5%). See Fig. 4.1 below.

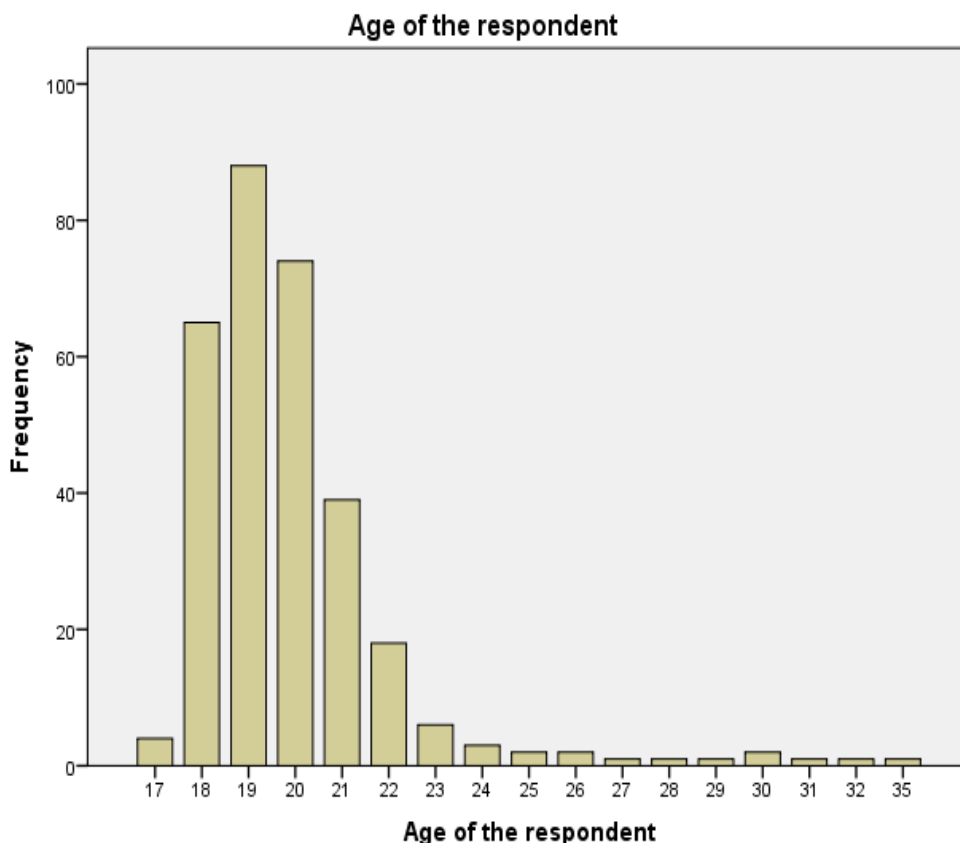


Figure 4.1: Age of the respondents

The respondents were from the following eight Schools: Agriculture, Education, Environmental Sciences, Health Sciences, Human and Social Sciences, Law, Management Sciences and Mathematical and Natural Sciences.

As illustrated in Table 4.1 and Fig. 4.2, the majority of the respondents (86 students, 27.8%) were from the School of Human and Social Sciences whereas the least (3 students, 1.0%) were from the School of Agriculture. All the students (309, 100%) were level-one students at the university at the University of Venda in 2016.

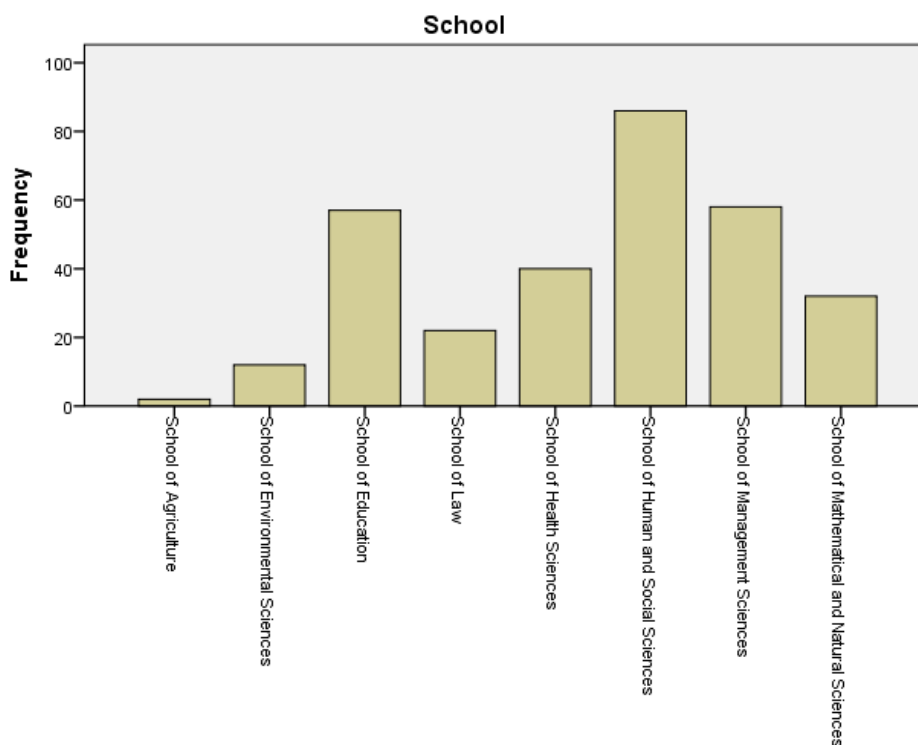


Figure 4.2: School of the respondents

4.3 READING STRATEGIES UTILISED BY LEVEL-ONE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

This section presents the findings of the study which were obtained from the thirty items included in the questionnaire concerning the English reading comprehension strategies that level-one students at the University of Venda perceived they utilised while reading English academic materials and the extent they utilised these strategies. The findings were computed to investigate and analyse their frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. In addition, the average scores were interpreted using the interpretation key suggested by Oxford and Burrystock (as cited in Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002: 4) for general learning strategy usage: high (mean of 3.5 or higher), moderate (mean of 2.5 to 3.4), and low (mean of 2.4 and lower). The results are shown in Tables 4.2 to 4.9 for answering the research questions number 1 and 2 as stated in Chapter 1.

Table 4.2: Summary of English Reading Strategies Questionnaire Responses

English Reading Strategy	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Usually		Always		Mean	SD	Usage Level
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.	3	1.0	3	1.0	73	23.6	83	36.9	147	47.6	4.19	.897	High
2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	5	1.6	12	3.9	84	27.2	72	23.3	136	44.0	4.04	1.007	High
3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	5	1.6	18	5.8	70	22.7	96	31.1	120	38.8	4.00	.998	High
4. I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	15	4.9	36	11.7	122	39.5	73	23.6	63	20.4	4.04	1.007	High
5. When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	64	20.7	61	19.7	77	24.9	31	10.0	76	24.6	2.98	1.455	Moderate
6. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	44	14.2	55	17.8	90	29.1	63	20.4	57	18.4	3.11	1.297	Moderate
7. I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading.	4	1.3	10	3.2	44	14.2	61	19.7	190	61.5	4.37	.933	High

8. I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organisation.	31	10.0	44	14.2	114	36.9	66	21.4	54	17.5	3.22	1.188	Moderate
9. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	2	0.6	7	2.3	60	19.4	72	23.3	168	54.4	4.28	.899	High
10. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	4	1.3	19	6.1	42	13.6	63	20.4	181	58.6	4.29	1.002	High
11. I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	9	2.9	19	6.1	72	23.3	86	27.8	123	39.8	3.95	1.068	High
12. When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	25	8.1	40	12.9	101	32.7	75	24.3	68	22.0	3.39	1.195	Moderate
13. I use reference materials (e.g., a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.	19	6.1	33	10.7	81	26.2	67	21.7	109	35.3	3.69	1.227	High
14. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading.	4	1.3	10	3.2	54	17.5	81	26.2	160	51.8	4.24	.940	High
15. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	33	10.7	61	19.7	96	31.1	51	16.5	68	22.0	3.19	1.280	Moderate
16. I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.	15	4.9	44	14.2	101	32.7	74	23.9	75	24.3	3.49	1.147	Moderate

17. I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.	15	4.9	38	12.3	87	28.2	91	29.4	78	25.2	3.58	1.136	High
18. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	13	4.2	22	7.1	75	24.3	68	22.0	131	42.4	3.91	1.152	High
19. I try to picture or visualise information to help remember what I read.	17	5.5	18	5.8	78	25.2	90	29.1	106	34.3	3.81	1.136	High
20. I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information.	56	18.1	50	16.2	90	29.1	66	21.4	47	15.2	2.99	1.309	Moderate
21. I critically analyse and evaluate the information presented in the text.	12	3.9	43	13.9	101	32.7	89	28.8	64	20.7	3.49	1.086	Moderate
22. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	19	6.1	33	10.7	100	32.4	83	26.9	74	23.9	3.52	1.147	High
23. I check my understanding when I come across new information.	7	2.3	19	6.1	66	21.4	103	33.3	114	36.9	3.96	1.017	High
24. I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read.	23	7.4	18	5.8	77	24.9	103	33.3	88	28.5	3.70	1.161	High

25. When text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding.	3	1.0	13	4.2	34	11.0	86	27.8	173	56.0	4.34	.903	High
26. I ask myself questions I like to have answers in the text.	23	7.4	23	7.4	73	23.6	87	28.2	103	33.3	3.72	1.211	High
27. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	29	9.4	30	9.7	76	24.6	85	27.5	89	28.8	3.57	1.259	High
28. When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	31	10.0	38	12.3	90	29.1	70	22.7	80	25.0	3.42	1.271	Moderate
29. When reading, I translate from English into my mother tongue.	14	4.5	18	5.8	70	22.7	69	22.3	138	44.7	3.97	1.148	High
30. When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.	9	2.9	21	6.8	67	21.7	68	22.0	144	46.6	4.03	1.105	High

With regard to the first two research questions – what are the reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda and to what extent do level-one students at the University of Venda use these reading strategies – valuable information elicited from the questionnaires is described with an over-all comment as follows:

As summed up in Table 4.2, the respondents reported using all the strategies with different scales. Taking into account the frequency and percentage figures calculated from a 5-point Likert scale ranging from five (5) to one (1): a score of five (5) means the strategy was always used, a score of four (4) means it was often used, a score of three (3) means it was sometimes used, a score of two (2) means it was rarely used, and a score of one (1) means it was never used, on the whole, there was a remarkable result shown in that the highest score and percentage derived from each item seemed to fall into three ranges, sometimes, usually and always. This indicates that most of the students always used the strategies of the items number: 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 18, 19, 23, 25, 26, 27, 29 and 30, while most of the students sometimes used the strategies of the items number: 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22 and 28. The strategy of item number 24 'I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read', is the only item that was usually used by most of the students. In relation to this information, the highest percentage of the strategy being used in comparison with those thirty items was 61.50% which corresponded to the item number 7. (See Table 4.3 overleaf):

Table 4.3: I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading

I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	4	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Rarely	10	3.2	3.2	4.5
	Sometimes	44	14.2	14.2	18.8
	Usually	61	19.7	19.7	38.5
	Always	190	61.5	61.5	100.0
	Total	309	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.3 above shows that of the 309 respondents who participated in the study, an overwhelming 61.5% (190 students) affirmed that they always read slowly and carefully to make sure they understand what they are reading as contrasted to only 1.3% (4 students) who indicated that they never read slowly and carefully to make sure they understand what they are reading. The same figures are encapsulated in Figure 4.3 below:

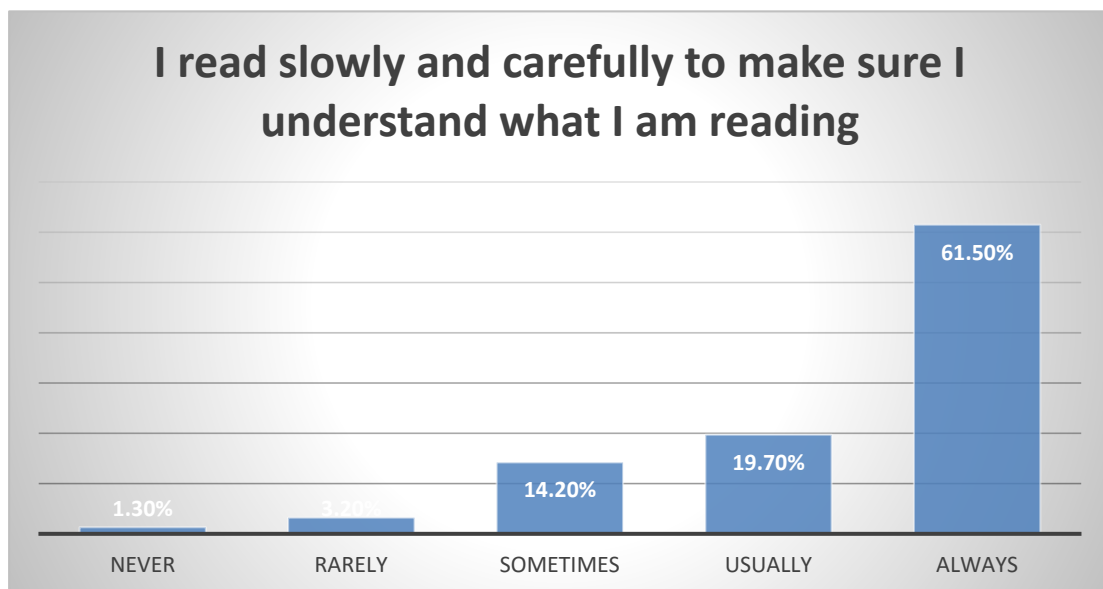


Figure 4.3 I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading

Another strategy which was highly used subsequently was item number 10. This meant that 58.6 or 181 students reported always underlining or circling information in the text to help them remember it. Nonetheless, the average score derived from this strategy was relatively high, that is, 4.9.

Additionally, it is interesting to note from Table 4.2 that there was a single pair of an average score with an equivalent figure for items number 2 'I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read' and 4 'I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it' which were reported having the same average score which was 4.04.

In terms of the equal number of percentage obtained from some items, it was found that the items number 12 and 15 were reported being used with the same number and moderate percentage for the scale of 'always'. This meant that 68 students or 22% always decide what to read closely and what to ignore and use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase their understanding when reading. The mean of item number 12 was 3.39 whereas the mean of item number 15 was 3.19. Items 12 and 16 were reported being used with the same number and moderate percentage for the scale 'sometimes'. This meant that 101 students or 32.7 % sometimes decide what to read closely and what to ignore and stop from time to time and think about what they are reading. Moreover, their mean were not very different from each other: the mean of item number 12 was 3.39 whereas the mean for item number 16 was 3.49. The findings also show that items number 3, 19, 24, and 29 were also reported as being used with the same number and percentage for the scale of 'rarely'. This meant that 18 students or 5.8% rarely think about what they know to help them understand what they read, try to picture or visualise information to help remember what they read, try

to guess what the content of the text is about when they read, translate from English into the mother tongue when they read.

The mean of item number 12 was 3.39 whereas that of item number 15 was 3.19. Moreover, their means were not very different from one another: the mean for items number 3, 19, 24 and 29 were 4.00, 3.81, 3.70 and 3.97 respectively.

Items number 1 and 25 were also reported being used with the same number and percentage for the scale of 'never'. This meant that 3 students or 1% never have a purpose in mind when they read and rarely re-read the text to increase their understanding when the text becomes difficult. The mean of item number 12 was 3.39 whereas that of item number 15 was 3.19. Moreover, the means for items 1 and 25 were 4.19 and 4.34 respectively.

With regard to the levels of reading strategies usage according to the interpretation key suggested by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995), it is important to note that Table 4.2 reported that the interpretation of average score of each item obtained by the respondents fell into two usage designations: high and moderate. Twenty one items (number 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, and 30) were reported being used at high level with the highest mean of 4.37 from the item number 7 'I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading' while the lowest mean of 2.98 from item number 5 'When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read'.

Table 4.4 When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read

When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	64	20.7	20.7	20.7
	Rarely	61	19.7	19.7	40.5
	Sometimes	77	24.9	24.9	65.4
	Usually	31	10.0	10.0	75.4
	Always	76	24.6	24.6	100.0
	Total	309	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.4 above illustrates that of the 309 respondents who participated in the study, 76 students who constituted 24.6% affirmed that when textbook becomes difficult, they always read aloud to help them understand what they read, 31 students constituting 10% usually read aloud to help them understand what they read when textbook becomes difficult, 77 students constituting 24.9% sometimes read aloud to help them understand what they read when textbook becomes difficult, 61 students constituting 19.7% rarely read aloud to help them understand what they read when textbook becomes difficult and 64 students who constituted 20.7% of the overall respondents indicated that they read aloud to help them understand what they read when textbook becomes difficult. It should be pointed out that even though this reading strategy scored the lowest mean out of the thirty reading strategies, its usage level was moderate. The same figures are also encapsulated in Figure 4.4 overleaf:

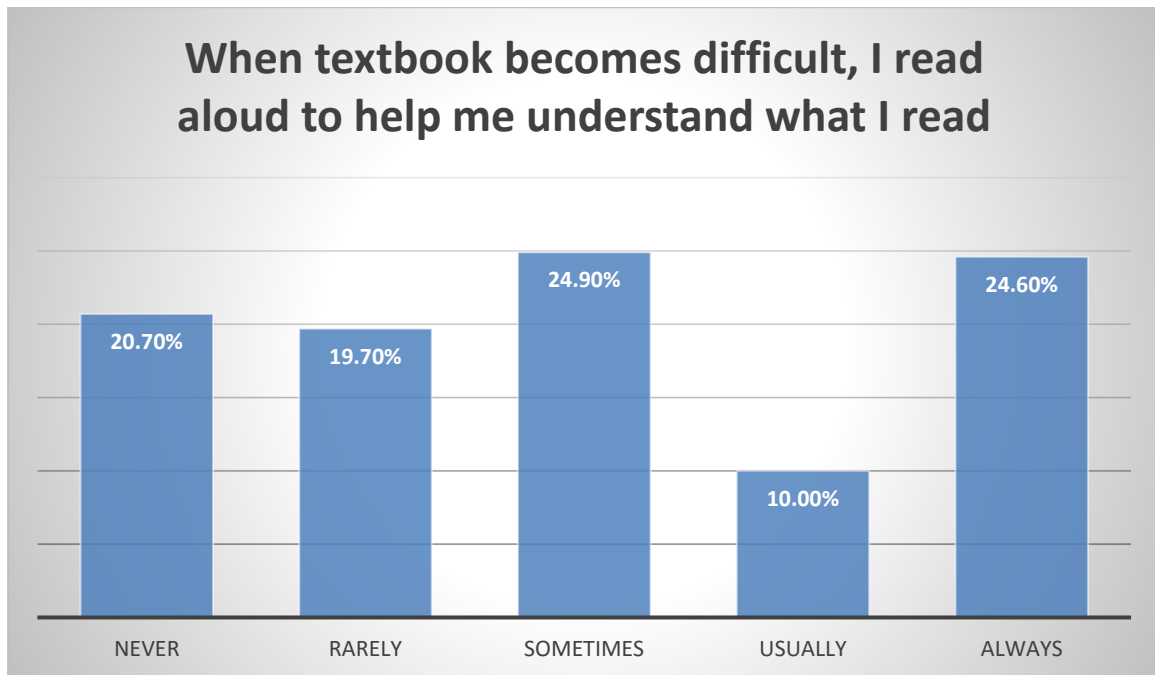


Figure 4.4 When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read

Nine items (number 5, 6, 8, 12, 15, 16, 20, 21 and 28) were reported being used at a moderate level with the highest mean of 3.49 from item 21 'I critically analyse and evaluate the information presented in the text' and lowest mean of 2.98 from item 5 'When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read'.

4.3.1 Global Reading Strategies Utilised by the level-one students at the University of Venda

This section presents the research findings of the Global Reading Strategies utilised by the level-one students at the University of Venda.

Table 4.5 Global Reading Strategies

Global Reading Strategies	Mean	Standard Deviation	Usage Level
1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.	4.19	.897	High
3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	4.00	.998	High
4. I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	4.04	1.007	High
6. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	3.11	1.297	Moderate
8. I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organisation.	3.22	1.188	Moderate
12. When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	3.39	1.195	Moderate
15. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	3.19	1.280	Moderate
17. I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.	3.58	1.136	High
20. I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information.	2.99	1.309	Moderate
21. I critically analyse and evaluate the information presented in the text.	3.49	1.086	Moderate
23. I check my understanding when I come across new information.	3.96	1.017	High
24. I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read.	3.70	1.161	High
27. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	3.57	1.259	High
TOTAL	3.57		

From the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002: 4), the thirty items are subdivided into three categories: global reading strategies (13 items), problem-solving strategies (8 items), and support reading strategies (9 items). To begin with, with reference to the global reading strategies as shown in Table 4.5, there are thirteen strategies or items included in this category; seven out of thirteen were reported being used at a high level, including items number 1 'I have a purpose in mind when I read', 3 'I think about what I know to help me understand what I read' , 4 'I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it' , 17 'I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading' , 23 'I check my understanding when I come across new information' , 24 'I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read' and 27 'I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong' whereas the rest were used at a moderate level including items number 6 'I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose', 8 'I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organisation', 12 'When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore' , 15 'I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding' , 20 'I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information' and 21 'I critically analyse and evaluate the information presented in the text' . The highest score of 4.19 fell on item number 1: 'I have a purpose in mind when I read", while on average the item number 20: 'I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information' was reported least used with the mean of 2.99.

4.3.2 Problem-Solving Reading Strategies Utilised by the level-one students at the University of Venda

This section presents the research findings of the problem-solving reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda as encapsulated in Table 4.6 overleaf.

Table 4.6 Problem-solving reading strategies

Problem Solving Strategies	Mean	Standard Deviation	Usage Level
7. I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading.	4.37	.933	High
9. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	4.28	.899	High
11. I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	3.95	1.068	High
14. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading.	4.24	.940	High
16. I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.	3.49	1.147	Moderate
19. I try to picture or visualise information to help remember what I read.	3.81	1.136	High
25. When text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding.	4.34	.903	High
28. When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	3.42	1.297	Moderate
TOTAL	3.98		

Table 4.6 shows a total of eight problem solving strategies in the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS). Of the eight strategies, six were reported being used at a high level including items number 7 'I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading', 9 'I try to get back on track when I lose concentration', 11 'I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading', 14 'When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading', 19 'I try to picture or visualise information to help remember what I read', and 25 'When text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding', while the other two strategies – the items number 16 'I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading' and 28 'When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases' – were used at a moderate level. With regard to this information, it is important to note that among these eight problem-solving strategies, the highest average score was 4.37 which was scored for the item number 7, 'I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading', whereas the lowest average score was 3.42 which was scored for the item number 28, 'When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases'.

4.3.3 Support Reading Strategies utilised by the level-one students at the University of Venda

This section presents the research findings of the Support Reading Strategies utilised by the level-one students at the University of Venda.

Table 4.7 Support reading strategies

Support Strategies	Mean	Standard Deviation	Usage Level
2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	4.04	1.007	High
5. When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	2.98	1.455	Moderate
10. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	4.29	1.002	High
13. I use reference materials (e.g., a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.	3.69	1.227	High
18. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	3.91	1.1152	High
22. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	3.52	1.147	High
26. I ask myself questions I like to have answers in the text.	3.72	1.211	High
29. When reading, I translate from English into my mother tongue.	3.97	1.148	High
30. When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.	4.03	1.105	High
TOTAL	3.79		

Out of nine reading strategies grouped in the support strategies, eight of these were reported as being used at high level, including items number 2 'I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read', 10 'I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it', 13 'I use reference materials (e.g., a dictionary) to help me understand what I read', 18 'I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read', 22 'I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it', 26 'I ask myself questions I like to have answers in the text', 29 'When reading, I translate from English into my mother tongue' and 30 'When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue' while only one item number 5 'When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read' was reported used at a moderate level. The highest average score was 4.29 which was scored under item number 10 'I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it'. On the contrary, the lowest average score was 2.98 which was scored under item number 5 'When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read'.

When comparing the total average score from the results shown in Tables 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7 of the aforementioned three categories, the results reveal that the highest mean frequency with which the respondents used a given category of strategies when reading English academic materials was 3.98 which was derived from the category of problem-solving strategies, while the category of support reading strategies and global reading strategies were reported being used with the relative mean of 3.79 and 3.57 respectively.

4.3.4 Five most frequently used reading strategies utilised by the level-one students at the University of Venda

This section presents the research findings of the five most frequently used reading strategies utilised by the level-one students at the University of Venda.

Table 4.8 Five most frequently used strategies

Category	Strategy	Mean	Standard Deviation	Usage Level
PROBLEM SOLVING	I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading.	4.37	.933	High
PROBLEM SOLVING	When text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding.	4.34	.903	High
SUPPORT READING	I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	4.29	1.002	High
PROBLEM SOLVING	I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	4.28	.899	High
PROBLEM SOLVING	When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading.	4.24	.940	High

As illustrated in Table 4.8, the five most frequently utilised strategies by the respondents were 'reading slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading' (Mean = 4.37), 'When text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding' (Mean = 4.34), 'I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it' (Mean = 4.29), 'I try to get back on track when I lose concentration' (Mean = 4.28), and 'When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading' (Mean = 4.24). As shown in Table 6, all the five strategies were at the high level of usage. Of the five most frequently utilised reading strategies, 4 (80%) were from the problem-solving category and 1 (20%) from the support reading category. No global reading strategies were in the five most frequently utilised reading strategies.

4.3.5 Five least frequently used reading strategies utilised by the level-one students at the University of Venda

This section presents the research findings of the five least frequently used reading strategies utilised by the level-one students at the University of Venda.

Table 4.9 Five least frequently used reading strategies

Category	Strategy	Mean	Standard Deviation	Usage Level
SUPPORT READING	When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	2.98	1.455	Moderate
GLOBAL READING	I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information.	2.98	1.309	Moderate
GLOBAL READING	I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	3.11	1.297	Moderate
GLOBAL READING	I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	3.19	1.280	Moderate
GLOBAL READING	I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organisation.	3.22	1.188	Moderate

As illustrated in Table 4.9, the five least frequently utilised strategies by the respondents were 'When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read' (Mean = 2.98), 'I use typographical features such as bold face and italics to identify key information' (Mean = 2.98), 'I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose' Mean = 3.11), 'I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding', (Mean = 3.19) and 'I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organisation' (Mean = 3.22). As illustrated in Table 7, all the five strategies were at the moderate level of usage. Of the five least frequently utilised reading strategies, 4 (80%) were from the global reading category and 1 (20%) was from the support reading category. No problem-solving strategies were in the five least frequently utilised reading strategies.

4.4 OTHER READING STRATEGIES UTILISED BY LEVEL ONE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

This section presents the findings directed towards the third research question which requested the respondents to identify if there were other reading strategies which they also utilised, apart from the thirty items listed on the SORS. According to the data obtained from the questionnaires, a total of 173 respondents (55.99%) indicated that there were no other reading strategies that they utilised. However, a total of 136 respondents (44.01) pointed out that there were additional reading strategies which they also utilised. The following information covers other reading strategies which the respondents, apart from the thirty items listed on the SORS, additionally utilised.

It is important to note that from the data collected, four different themes emerged on other reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda.

First, a large number of the respondents pointed out that when they come across difficult and unfamiliar words or incomprehensible content, they employ other reference resources apart from dictionaries which include searching for more information from the internet, engaging in group discussions and seeking clarity from other students or lecturers.

Second, other respondents pointed out that they read only when they had concentration. They further commented that it seemed useless for them to read while losing concentration because while reading, a number of thinking processes such as reading and comprehension needed to be integrated. Therefore it would be better to read when having concentration as it would facilitate more understanding of what they were reading than attempting to read while losing concentration.

Third, another group of respondents pointed out that texts with simple vocabulary or interesting activities/exercises motivated them to read. They indicated that reading the text with difficult words at the beginning demotivated them from reading further. One of the respondents indicated that a text with an interesting activity or exercise provided a relaxing and amusing atmosphere suitable for him/her to remember the content.

Fourth, other respondents indicated that they would choose to read only what they were interested in. They pointed out that when they felt bored, they would stop reading. In other words, the respondents would read only what and when they wanted to read. In terms of the text with simple vocabulary, the respondents further commented that using the text with difficult words at the beginning demotivated them to read further. For the case of an interesting activity/exercise, the respondents commented that this kind of activity/exercise provided a relaxing and amusing atmosphere and was suitable for them to remember the content.

Some of the responses elicited from the respondents on this section, were more or less the same as those contained in the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS), namely: Some respondents pointed out that they use highlighters to highlight points which they consider important to aid their memories: this was similar to item number 10, 'I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it', while some respondents pointed out that they rewrite what they have read in their own words to see if they understood which is similar to item number 18, 'I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.'

4.5 CONCLUSION

The chapter focused on the presentation of the research findings. In the next chapter, a summary of the study and the findings are presented together with a discussion about the major results from the study. Conclusion and recommendations for further studies are given at the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, data was presented and analysed. Chapter five presents the summary of the study, summary of the findings, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The summary of objectives, respondents, instrumentation and procedures of this study is as follows:

5.2.1 Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted to investigate the perceived reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda and to identify other additional reading strategies which can help level-one students at the University of Venda to improve their academic reading skills.

5.2.2 Participants, Instrumentation and Procedure

Participants consisted of 309 level-one students registered at the University of Venda in 2016. Their ages ranged from 17 to 35 years old. The majority of the respondents were 19 years old (88 students, 28.5%). The respondents were randomly selected from the following eight Schools: Agriculture, Education, Environmental Sciences, Health Sciences, Human and Social Sciences, Law, Management Sciences and Mathematical and Natural Sciences. The study included three research questions:

- What are the reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda?
- To what extent do level one students at the University of Venda use these reading strategies?
- Which other reading strategies are utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda?

Data of the study were obtained through the questionnaire which consisted of three sections. The first section was designed to ask the participants' biographical information regarding their gender, age, school, and number of years in university. The second section was adapted from the SORS to survey the regularity with which the participants used reading strategies described in each statement when reading English academic materials. The SORS consisted of thirty (30) items which measure the three sub-categories of reading strategies: global reading strategies (13 items), problem-solving strategies (8 items), and support reading strategies (9 items). The third section was an open-ended question regarding any other English reading strategies that students utilised which was not included in the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents during English Communication Skills (ECS) classes and all of them were returned after completion. The collected data from the questionnaire responses were then calculated and analysed using the IBM SPSS/PC programme. Students' general information was ultimately analysed by using frequency and percentage, and the students' frequency use of each reading strategy were analysed by using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and usage level. The responses on the additional English reading

strategies that students utilised were interpreted, analysed and grouped to be in line with the similar idea.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The findings from this study as stated in Chapter Four are summarised below:

5.3.1 The Students' Biographical Information

The study findings revealed that there were more females respondents (53%) than males (56.3%). The majority of the respondents were 19 years old (88 students, 28.5%). Most of the respondents (86 students, 27.8%) were from the School of Human and Social Sciences whereas the least (3 students, 1.0%) were from the School of Agriculture. All the students (309, 100%) were level-one students at the University at the University of Venda in 2016.

5.3.2 The Students' Frequency Use of English Reading Strategies

The findings of this research revealed that on the whole, each of the thirty items included in the Survey of Reading Strategies was utilised with different frequencies. In line with the interpretation key suggested by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) for general learning strategy use, the overall usage level fell into two usage designations: high and moderate. Twenty one items were reported being used at high level with the highest mean of 4.37 while nine items were reported being used at a moderate level with the highest mean of 3.49. The highest mean was on the strategy, 'reading slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading' (Mean = 4.37) whereas the strategy, 'When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read' (Mean = 2.98), was on average, the least used. When comparing the total average score of the three categories from the SORS, the results reveal that the

highest mean frequency with which the respondents used a given category of strategies when reading English academic materials was 3.98 which was derived from the category of problem-solving strategies, while the category of support reading strategies and global reading strategies were reported being used with the relative mean of 3.79 and 3.57 respectively.

5.3.3 The Students' Additional Reading Strategies

The study revealed four new findings related to additional English reading strategies that students utilised. These included: First, employing other reference resources apart from dictionaries which include searching for more information from the internet, engaging in group discussions and seeking clarity from other students or lecturers when coming across difficult and unfamiliar words or incomprehensible content; second, reading only when they had concentration; third, reading texts with simple vocabulary or interesting activities/exercises; and fourth, reading only what and when they wanted to read.

5.4 DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY RESULTS

The objective of the study was to investigate the reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda and to identify other additional reading strategies which can help them to improve their academic reading skills. The aim was to find answers to the three research questions stated earlier in Chapter One. The discussion about the major results is therefore presented based on the three research questions.

5.4.1 Research Questions One and Two

What are the reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda and to what extent do they utilise these reading strategies?

Data collected through the Survey of Reading Strategies answers research questions one and two concerning the type and frequency of reading strategies that the respondents participating in this study reported to using while reading academic materials in English. The results reveal that the respondents participating in this study were to a large extent, aware of what they were doing while reading as they reported utilising English reading strategies with different frequencies and with the high and moderate levels of reading strategy usage. The findings of the study reveal that most of the strategies utilised during the reading comprehension process were particular to each respondent; in other words, each individual read differently and used different combinations of strategies. This observation corroborates with the claim by Anderson (1999:2) that a variety of reading strategies are used by the reader to achieve reading comprehension. In addition, the reading strategies utilised by the reader are unique to each reader.

Research findings reveal that the most frequently used strategies for the respondents were problem-solving strategies described by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002:4) as the actions and procedures that readers use while working directly with the text, and these are localised, focused techniques used when problems develop in understanding textual information. The research findings reveal that on average, most of the respondents used the category of problem solving strategies with a mean of (3.98) when they encountered reading difficulties by reading slowly and carefully to make sure they understand what they are reading, getting back on track when they lose

concentration, adjusting their reading speed according to what they are reading, paying closer attention to what they are reading when text becomes difficult, stopping from time to time to think about what they are reading, trying to picture or visualise information to help them remember what they read, to re-read text to increase their understanding when text becomes difficult, and to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases. These research findings lend support to the previous study by Koda (2005) who maintains that when encountering comprehension problems, strategic readers continuously adjust their reading behaviours to accommodate or remediate text difficulty, task demands, and other contextual variables. This means that when readers monitor their reading process carefully, they take instant steps to develop an in-depth understanding of the text they are reading.

Moreover, the result of the highest use of problem-solving strategies is consistent with the cognitive view of reading. According to Bernhardt's cognitive perspective (1991:6), the reading process is regarded as an intrapersonal problem-solving task which takes place within the brain's knowledge structures, while under the psycholinguistic-cognitive approach to reading, Barnett (1989) maintains that the cognitive view of reading is learner-centred and places cognitive development and text processing at the core of its view on reading.

In comparison, the result of the highest use of the category of problem-solving strategies obtained from the study lends support to the findings from the study conducted by Magogwe (2013: 4), which used the SORS to explore the awareness level of the University of Botswana students on their use of metacognitive reading strategies. Among three sub-categories, the findings demonstrated that the respondents deployed the problem-solving strategies most frequently with an overall

mean of 3.9, followed by the support reading strategies and the global reading strategies that have an overall mean of 3.42 each. However, the result of the highest use of the category of problem solving strategies obtained from the study contrasted to the findings from the study that was conducted by Anderson (as cited in Anderson, 2003: 7 – 8), to examine the differences in reading strategy usage while reading academic materials between native speakers (US students) and non-native speakers of English (ESL students). The results of the study indicated that the ESL students reported using a greater number of support strategies such as taking notes while reading, underlining or circling information to help remembering, translating from English into native language. Likewise, it was further explained that this finding should not be surprising because learners of English were expected to need more support strategies.

5.4.2 Research Question Three

Which other reading strategies can be utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda?

The finding that a large number of respondents employ other reference resources apart from dictionaries which include searching for more information from the internet, engaging in group discussions and seeking clarity from other students or lecturers when they come across difficult and unfamiliar words or incomprehensible content is supported by the research from Bang and Zhao (2005:39), which examined the reading strategies utilised by advanced Korean and Chinese ESL learners when reading academic texts. The finding revealed that the Chinese participants preferred discussion with peers and help from peers or teachers as ways of achieving comprehension of academic texts.

The finding that other respondents read only when they have concentration is supported by Watinee Janarge (2008:36) who maintain that as another reading strategy, concentration is the way to achieve success in reading.

The finding that texts with simple vocabulary or interesting activities/exercises motivate respondents to read is supported by Devine (1986) who maintains that as examining factors affecting student comprehension of texts, the teacher should remember that a text does play a role in its own comprehensibility. Relevant issues which should be taken into consideration are the syntactic and semantic form, and the organisational pattern. In addition, reading materials given to students at all levels should be related to student interest, student need, or student's existing knowledge of the world or that portion of world treated in the texts.

The research finding that some respondents would choose to read only what they were interested in and would stop reading when bored is corroborated by two out of the four basic assumptions about the comprehension process examined by Devine (1986: 15 – 18) which are: 'students must want to figure out the code' and 'students must have text that they can decode'. Devine holds that reading requires a moment of the reader's attention and that students only pay attention to what interests them at a given moment or when they have a definite purpose. Such a purpose grows out of students' natural desire to learn something new, to make discoveries about themselves and the world around them.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

Given that using reading strategies is important to understand academic texts in English, the results of this study have several implications for lecturers, teachers and students in ESL and EFL classrooms. Although the majority of level-one students

reported overall high and moderate frequency use of reading strategies to read academic materials such as textbooks and journals, they still need to be assisted to utilise the reading strategies substantially.

- Specifically, the students should be assisted where they reported moderate use of strategies. Lecturers and teachers should emphasise skills such as deciding what to read closely and what to ignore; using context clues; using typographical features; guessing the meaning of unknown words; and interrogating text.
- ESL and EFL lecturers can use the SORS to survey the reading strategies utilised by their students. They can use the survey results analysis to identify which reading strategies their students use to understand English academic texts. Also, lecturers can learn from these results if their students use ineffective reading strategies and thus, they can work on designing activities that help these students avoid using poor reading strategies and learn to use skilled ones.
- ESL and EFL lecturers can use the SORS to make their students aware of additional reading strategies that their students were not acquainted with before. This help students learn extra reading strategies that make these students comprehend English academic texts effectively.
- ESL and EFL lecturers should be equipped with pertinent instructional strategies so as to build their capacity on solid foundations, if this is not the case, it is likely to have a lot of adverse effects on the reading competence of the students. Thus, short and long term training programmes should be organised for ESL and EFL lecturers to update not only their awareness, but also to practically cultivate their methods of teaching.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Further research needs to examine why certain strategies are utilised or not utilised in the ESL/EFL contexts.
- Further research should also use a reading test to test the reading comprehension strategies used by students rather than depending only on the reading strategies questionnaire.
- There is a need to investigate the role of teaching essential reading strategies and assessing its impact on reading comprehension in ESL/EFL learners.
- Because simply knowing what reading strategy to use is not sufficient, additional studies should be conducted to investigate the actual use of such strategies to shed light on the issues investigated, thereby revealing new aspects of what EFL/ESL learners actually do when they become actively involved in the reading process.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This aim of the study was to investigate the reading strategies utilised by level-one students at the University of Venda while reading English academic materials and how often they use these strategies. The study focused on the type and frequency of reading strategies as well as additional reading strategies that the respondents utilised when in their English academic reading. Data was collected by means of a self-completion questionnaire of the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey. The results reveal that the respondents participating in this study reported high and moderate levels of reading strategy usage. This study, however, recommends additional reading strategy research to compare students from different schools/faculties and genders, especially in the ESL context to augment the

findings of this study. In conclusion, it is important to note that reading strategies should be regarded as an opportunity to provide students with knowledge and confidence that enables them to manage their own learning and empowers them to be inquisitive and zealous in their pursuits.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

Survey of Reading Strategies

English Reading Strategies in English Reading Comprehension of Level - One Student at the University of Venda

The purpose of this survey is to collect information about the reading strategies that level-one students in the University of Venda use when reading academic materials in English. There is no wrong or right answer to the questionnaire. All responses given will be treated anonymously and will not affect the semester marks, therefore, please answer all the items honestly.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections:

Section 1: Demographic data of the respondents

Section 2: The respondents' English reading strategies in English reading comprehension

Section 3: the respondents' other English reading strategies in English reading comprehension

Section 1

Demographic data of the respondents

Instructions: Please, fill your information in the spaces provided and put an X in the parentheses in front of the items needed.

1. Gender: _____ Male _____ Female
2. Age: _____
3. School: _____
4. Number of years in University: _____

Section 2

The respondents' reading strategies in English reading comprehension

Instructions: All the statements below refer to your reading of academic materials in English (for example, textbooks, reading comprehension exercises, or other additional readings related to course contents). Each statement is followed by five numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, and each number means the following:

“1” means that “I never do this”

“2” means that “I rarely do this”

“3” means that “I sometimes do this”

“4” means that “I usually do this”

“5” means that “I always do this”

After reading each statement, draw a cross X on the number which applies to you. Please be reminded that there are no right or wrong responses to any of the items on this questionnaire.

English Reading Strategy	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When textbook becomes difficult, I read aloud to help	1	2	3	4	5

me understand what I read.					
6. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5
12. When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I use reference materials (e.g., a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	1	2	3	4	5

16. I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I try to picture or visualise information to help remember what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I critically analyse and evaluate the information presented in the text.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I check my understanding when I come across new information.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read.	1	2	3	4	5
25. When text becomes	1	2	3	4	5

difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding.					
26. I ask myself questions I like to have answers in the text.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	1	2	3	4	5
28. When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	1	2	3	4	5
29. When reading, I translate from English into my mother tongue.	1	2	3	4	5
30. When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3

The respondents' other English reading strategies in English reading comprehension

Instructions: Apart from the above, do you have any other reading strategies in English reading comprehension? If yes, specify.

(Thank you for your time)

APPENDIX B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

I _____ (participant's name), hereby give my consent to participate in the research project entitled "A study of the English Reading Comprehension Strategies Utilised by Level-One Students at the University of Venda" conducted by Mr N.V. Demana. I hereby declare that the following have been clarified with me:

- I have read the Consent Form and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part in the study.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future. Furthermore, my withdrawal may not impact on my studies in any way.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may also contact the Research Ethics Committee, University of Venda, if I wish to lodge a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed: (Research participant)

Date:

Contact details

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