

# Democratising the Classroom for Epistemological Access: The Role of RtL Pedagogy in an Eastern Cape Secondary School, South Africa

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## Abstract

Using documentary evidence (learners' written, DoBE's curriculum documents, lessons plans, and prescribed workbooks) semi-structured interviews and Reading to Learn pedagogy, to generate data, this paper reports on the positive effect Reading to Learn (RtL) has on literacy development of Grade 10 English First Additional Language learners from a township school in South Africa. The main thrust of this paper is to trace how RtL positively influences literacy development of a cohort of learners whose teaching was informed by Reading to Learn principles. This paper argues that learners whose learning is informed by RtL principles experience accelerated literacy development. The approach is built on the theory of scaffolding proposed by Vygotsky, 1978 and Bruner, 1983; genre theory (Martin, 1985; Christie, 1990); and on the functional model of language developed by Halliday (1985). Systemic functional linguistics was used as the analytical framework; the study situates itself within the critical paradigm, subjective epistemology, and mixed-method research approach. The study revealed that RtL can be part of the solution towards resolving literacy development challenges faced by underprivileged learners in South Africa and other similar environments.

**Keywords:** Reading to Learn pedagogy; scaffolding; systemic functional linguistics; critical paradigm; subjective epistemology and mixed-method.

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## 1. Introduction

Achievement in reading development in South Africa continues to be low compared to the rest of the world, despite attempts by the Department of Basic Education (DoBE) to address the various shortcomings. According to Howie, Combrick, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, & Mcleod (2017) there was no tangible improvement in English among grade Grade 4 learners between 2006 and 2016. Approximately, 78% of South African Grade 4 learners failed to reach the international benchmarks pointing out that they do not have basic reading skills by the end of grade 4. In the most recent data comparable to (Spull, 2013), Govender & Hugo, (2020) reiterated that SACMEQ, 2013 and PIRLS, 2016 still reflect very poor literacy and numeracy levels resulting in South Africa coming 50 out of 50 participating countries. The current results resonate with Shabalala, 2005 were "nonnumerate" because they had not moved beyond mechanical skills linked to basic calculation and simple shape recognition. Against this background, Ribbens (2008: 108) says, "these poor levels of academic literacy are a matter of concern and reading intervention campaigns have been put in place not only locally but the world over" In addition South Africa has administered its own assessment tools such as Annual National Assessments (ANAs), which was comparable with international standards before it was compromised through malpractices in schools. According to Westaway (2015), Grade 12 Matric examinations and the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) indicate generally weak and highly 4 differentiated educational outcomes. The country introduced Annual National Assessment for grades 1, 3, 6, and 9. According to the 2012 to 2014 ANAs, the percentage of learners unable to read is alarming. In 2012 66% of the learners were not able to read in grade 4; 61% in 2013 and 59% in 2014. For grade 5, 70% were non-readers in 2012; 63% in 2013; 53% in 2014. Further, grade 6, 64% were non-readers in 2012; 54 % in 2013 and 55% in 2014. Lastly, for grade 9 65% were non-readers in 2012; 66% in 2013 and 66% in 2014 However, ANA has been discontinued because of the content and the level of tests, educators and learners focusing on test scores, dominance of rote learning, too administrative on teachers, same type of questions, highly incomparable with time, poorly administrated and absence of independence because everything was centred around DBE (Spull, 2015). The summary is in table 3. Reading deficits get worse as one progresses with grades. No significant improvements were registered from 2011 onward. The percentage average for reading in 2011 was 30% and 33% for Home Language and English First Additional Language, respectively. These trends for English First Additional Language are brought up to date in the table below.

**Table 1: National (ANAs) average marks for First Additional Language in 2012, 2013 and 2014**

GRDE	English First Additional 2012	English First Additional 2013	English First Additional
4	34	39	41
5	30	37	47
6	36	46	45
9	35	33	34

As earlier indicated in relation to the SACMEQ, TIMMS and PIRLS assessments, such literacy levels point to an ongoing educational crisis (Bloch, 2009). Similarly, Spaul (2017) reaffirmed that in 2011, 3% of grade 4 learners could not get to High International Benchmark (550) and in 2016 it was 2%. The downward trend persisted because in 2011, 10 of Grade 4 learners extended to the intermediate Benchmark (475) and in 2016, it was 8% (Mullis et al, 2017). The authorities appear unable to address the complexity of the problem and the evidence suggests a worsening rather than an improving situation.

**Table 2: National (ANAs) Grade 9 percentage of learners achieving 50% in English as a First Additional Language**

Grade	Percentage of learners achieving more or less		
	2012	2013	2014
9	21	17	18

**Table 2: National (ANAs) Grade 9 percentage of learners achieving 50% in English as a First Additional Language**

The system is failing the principal aims of the CAPS curriculum (2011: 4); that mastery of English First Additional Language will assist “learners irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment and meaningful participation in the society as citizens of a free country”. The 2014 ANA report within the Eastern Cape Province where the study was conducted shows that Grade 9 learners are the worst affected because no progress is registered in their results. Despite the content being age and grade appropriate learners fail to cope with the cognitively more demanding Further Education Training Band (Grades 10 to 12). Reports reveal that these learners have a limited vocabulary; hence fail to interpret a sentence or give their own opinion if called upon to do so (ANA Report, 2014: 11). Below is an illustration of the upsetting trends of the ANA results in the Eastern Cape from 2012 to 2014.

**Table 3: ANA Provincial trends in reading for the Eastern Cape in English First Additional**

Grade	2012	2013	2014
4	28.8	28.9	33.2
5	16.4	22.8	39.0
6	25	36.2	24.2
9	20.9	19.4	12.1

The implication is that for every year learners remains at school, they fall further behind the curriculum, giving rise to a situation where remediation is a solution and might be unattainable because the learning gaps have been left unattended to for too long. According to Spaul (2013), Eastern Cape results show that pupils are 1 year 8 months behind the benchmark by Grade 3, but this grows to 2, 8 years behind the benchmark by Grade 9, making remediation improbable. Similarly, Hart (2015) traces this situation back to the apartheid era, which created a negative environment for literacy development in South African schooling. According to (Pretorius, 2002) most schools are without; adequately trained teachers due to apartheid policies, libraries or access to libraries, and overcrowded classrooms, coupled with lack of learning materials such as exercise books, textbooks and appropriate reading materials, create a situation not conducive to literacy development. Many studies have found that pronunciation itself is a problem in South Africa (Macdonald, 1990). The results for the Grahamstown District, as highlighted below, are no exception:

**Table 4: District trends: Grahamstown district: Achievement standards in English First Additional Language**

Grade	2012	2013	2014
3	48.2	42.7	
6	41.9	50.6	39.5
9	36.9	39.1	35.3

The defects of the education system at national level negatively impact the provinces and districts. The weaknesses give limited opportunities of progress at the district. This may be due to less commitment of the office bearers. The level of literacy in Grahamstown reflects the national and provincial lower literacy levels. Literacy levels are dismal, as demonstrated by Table 4.

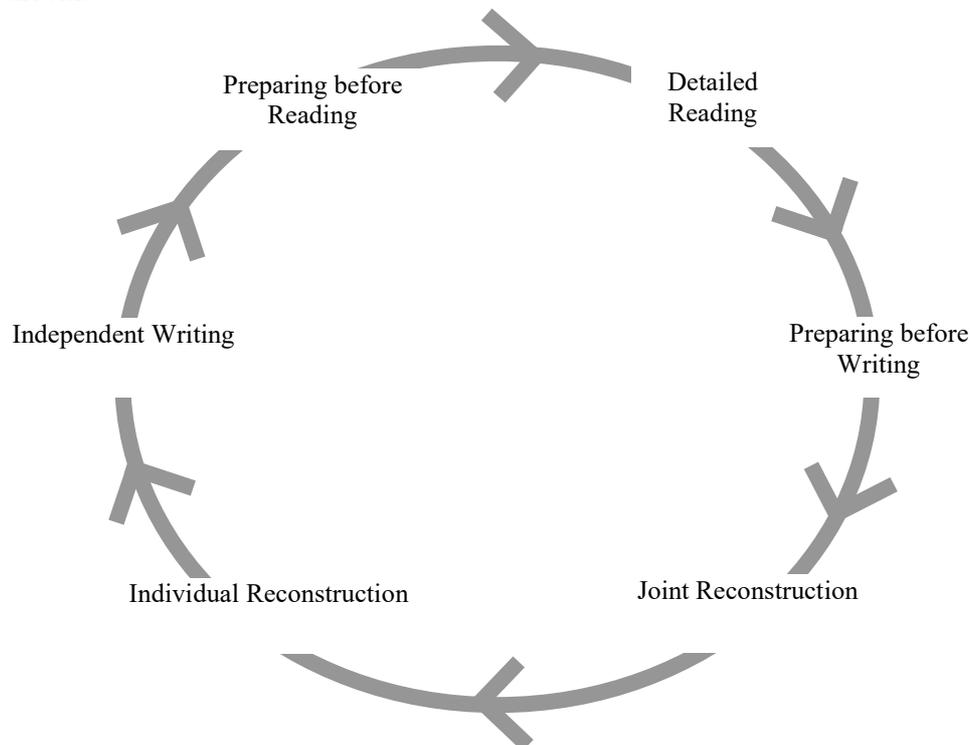
## **2. Attempts to engage with the poor literacy levels phenomenon.**

In response to these trends, Pretorius & Klapwijk (2016) Prinsloo et al., (2015); Murriss, (2014) Verbeek, (2010); Howie et al. (2008) Pretorius & Machet (2004) several scholars have engaged in research to establish the extent to which poor academic performance in South Africa regarding literacy and numeracy can be associated with poor reading habits (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007). Almost all these studies persistently associate poor academic performance with poor reading ability. In addition, secondary school learners attend to increased content which require them to write multiple assignments that need a lot of reading with comprehension (Swanson & Hoskyn, 2001). Woodruff, Schumaker and 9 Deschler (2002) claim that learners are becoming increasingly responsible for learning more complex, demanding content at a rapid pace to meet state standards and to pass outcome assessments. According to The International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement (IAEEA) showed that South Africa ranked lowest in terms of academic performance with almost seventy-eight percent of students failing to reach the low international benchmark (Mullis, Martin, Micheal, Fog and Arora, 2011). The prevailing situation appears to be the reason for the compromised academic writing and performance in tests, assignments and examinations, resulting in only twentynine percent of students being able to complete their degree courses within the stipulated periods (Vitalstats Public Higher Education, 2011). Against this background secondary teachers require knowledge of best practices to prevent students from falling further behind and to help bring struggling readers closer to reading for knowledge and pleasure (Woodruff et al., 2002). According to Zimmerman, Howie and du Toit (2008: 3): It is thus necessary to illuminate teaching practices in high school in order to aid mastery of the teaching context in which South African learners learn to read and then continue in their development of reading proficiency, and indeed, the context in which teachers are confronted with learners who struggle to successfully achieve fundamental reading skills for further academic development. One of the contemporary approaches that has been used in similar environments like South African marginalised communities is Reading to Learn pedagogy. It 10 proved its efficacy within the Australian indigenous communities that were ravaged with drugs and squalor (Rose, 2005).

### **2.1 Reading to Learn Methodology**

Rose (2010) in (Christie & Simpson, 2011 eds) provides an account of how in the late 1980s he and his colleagues developed a pedagogy from the experience he had with the underprivileged Pitjantjatjara indigenous community in Australia. This community suffered a disaster of an inferior education which could not pull them out of the quagmire of disadvantage. The education was inferior because Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee (PYEC) was composed of Aboriginal community members (Anangu) who largely retained their traditional values and customs. Further its inferiority was compounded by the generally semi-literate Anangu members who had minimal Western school experience and were mandated with decision-making and control over all education policies and operational practices (Geoff & Priscilla, 1999). Further, Rose (2010) relates how virtually every child of school-going age in this community was addicted to some substance and lived a life filled with despair. Fundamentally, he discovered that learners could not read at ageappropriate levels, despite their teachers having been trained to similar degrees as their counterparts in other Australian state-funded schools. In Rose's (Christie & Simpson, 2010: 14) words: "Whatever other problems were hampering the education of these children, their inability to read the school curriculum was clearly an overwhelming stumbling block". 11 Rose (2005) took the challenge on as a social justice project to reverse the social inequalities endured by this community through interventions in the classroom setting. He used a series of studies (Rose, 2004; Gibbons, 2002; Alexander, 2000) to devise a pedagogy that involved a question-response-feedback pattern, backed it up with the 'Scaffolding reading and writing for Indigenous Children in School' programme—developed in collaboration with his colleagues working on other initiatives targeted at disadvantaged communities (Rose 2008). He noted that non-exposure to early reading (parent – child reading) had a direct bearing on the learners' performance, and that learners in primary schools were not ready to learn from reading as expected. His pedagogic approach, Reading to Learn was then structured and used to breach these shortcomings. It is "... developed in response to current urgent needs, particularly of Indigenous and other marginalized learners, to rapidly improve reading and writing for educational access and success" (Rose, 2005: 131). The focus is on the teaching of reading and writing to democratise the classroom, i.e., to enable learning for, and ensure meaningful classroom participation of, children who come from less advantaged backgrounds, and frequently experience a gap between home and school literacy practices. To develop this pedagogy, Rose (2005) drew from the Vygotskian, Hallidayan and Bernsteinian theories of Social Learning, Systemic functional linguistics, respectively. The principles from Vygotsky's (1981) idea of learning as a social process, Halliday's (1993) conception of language as embedded in social context, and Bernstein's (1999) notion of pedagogic discourse, are put together in the development of the Reading to Learn pedagogy to scaffold learners whose 12 literacies do not necessarily match with those that schooling requires (Gee, 1991). To realise the goals of the Reading to Learn pedagogy, a 'Scaffolding Interaction Cycle' is implemented. This cycle suggests that, in engaging with written texts, teachers need to ensure that learners are provided with prompts or cues they need to

understand sequences of meanings at the level of the whole text, paragraph, sentence, wording, and sound/letter patterns. It insists that the pattern needs to be repeated through each activity in the sequence that makes up the scaffolding approach. When implemented in the classroom context, the Scaffolding Interaction Cycle underpins a series of activities in two carefully structured pedagogic routines, or 'lesson sequences': one for narrative texts, and one for factual texts (Rose, 1999). In applying the Scaffolding Interaction Cycle, illustrated in Figure 1, each activity during the lesson sequence draws on the discourse pattern of the text to provide the degree of support learners require to understand and recognise patterns of meaning in the text at a number of levels: the genre of the text and the way meaning unfolds, the sentences and wording of the text, and the sound/letter or spelling patterns in the text.



**Figure 1: Scaffolding Interaction Cycle (Martin & Rose, 2005).**

In the prepare before reading stage, the teacher reads the text out loud and summarises it. The learners listen and get the idea of the passage. They then read the passage, sentence-by-sentence, which is the detailed reading stage. The teacher gives meanings of words in each sentence. At this point, all the learners can read after the teacher and develop confidence in reading that passage. During the preparing before writing stage, the learners manipulate sentences on cardboard strips to practise spelling (primary school) or make notes from the passage to practise spelling in that exercise of taking notes (high school). This sets the stage for joint reconstruction. At this stage, the whole class writes a new story passage on the chalkboard. Here, the class uses the same words in the passage read, to create a new story, new events, new characters and/or a new setting. In factual texts, the passage read is re-written via the notes that the learners wrote. However, the language used is that of the learner, not of the text. This is also a whole class activity or a group activity. Individual reconstruction, Detailed Reading Preparing before writing Joint Reconstruction Individual Reconstruction Independent Writing Preparing before Reading is a crucial stage, sees the learner writing a new story, as an individual, using the same words to create his/her story. In factual texts, the passage is re-written via the notes, but this time the learner writes alone. It is the final stage, the independent writing stage, where the learners are given a task. Here they write as individuals and the task is assessed. As the word cycle implies, these teaching strategies are on-going, allowing learners to improve over time, and have been proven to enable weak readers within rural contexts to learn to read rapidly and write at grade-appropriate levels.

### **3. Strategies used, and concepts adopted in this research**

Lincoln and Cannella (2009) argue that a critical paradigm in educational research is designed to enable scholars to understand, uncover, illuminate, and transform how educational aims, dilemmas, tensions, and hopes are related to social divisions and power differentials. The intention of critical theory is not to narrate the state of the society and behaviour, but is rather to realise a society that is based on equality and democracy for its members, which is the goal of the Reading to Learn pedagogy used to generate data in this study. According to Cohen,

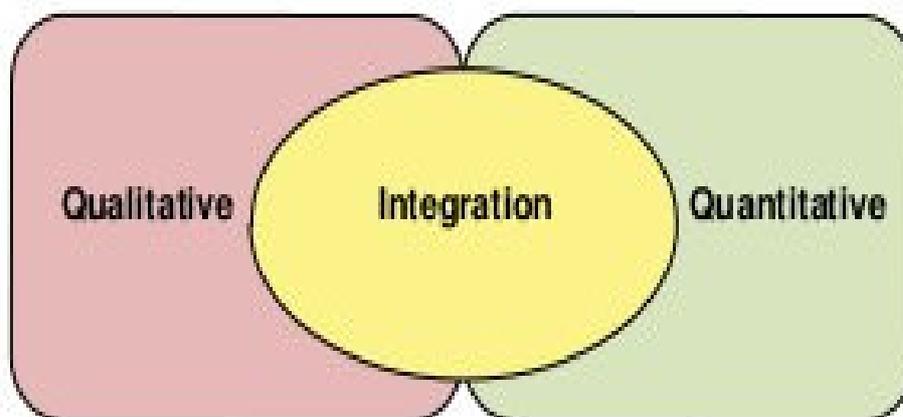
Manion and Morrison (2011: 31), “critical theory seeks to emancipate the disempowered to redress inequality and to promote individual freedoms within a democratic society.” In addition: Critical theory examines how schools perpetuate or reduce inequality; the social construction of knowledge and curricula - who defines worthwhile knowledge, what ideological interests this serves, and how this reproduces inequality in society; how power is produced and reproduced through education; whose interests are served by education and how legitimate these are (Cohen Manion & Morrison, 2011: 32). Schools in their dual nature play an emancipatory and a repressive role. Schools are emancipatory because they are enlightening, they are the places where the knowledge is generated validated and disseminated. However, they can be repressive in that they select what ought to be taught and what must not be taught (hidden curriculum). Zimmerman (1997) asserts that competency in English should include; meaning construction; reading to learn; fluency in reading; the ability to write; and reading at the appropriate speed. In support, Marshall (1987) asserts that if these aspects are ignored, teachers will be inculcating in learners what Kubota (1997) term fixed routines and dogmatic treatment of skills (what Vygotsky calls fossilisation). Kubota (1997) argue that such skills make learners develop one-way thinking that rejects whatever does not conform to existing knowledge. Learners develop a convergent type of thinking that will hinder their abilities to deal with tasks that require complex thinking. According to Sparks (1988) this may in turn, retard learners’ abilities to develop multiple skills required for success in their academic life. However, the curriculum is intentionally skewed towards the middle class thereby disadvantaging the working class. The curriculum is based on the premise that all learners who enter through the school gates have received early orientation relating to reading. It is because of the unfairness of the system that Rose’s approach intends to make education as the practice of freedom as opposed to education as the practice of domination of the marginalised (Freire, 1970). The major aim of RtL is to make the child literary competent and engage 16 with any text despite family background. The RtL approach is in line with the concerns raised by Eagleton (1991) who identifies the ‘false’ or ‘fragmented’ consciousness that has brought an individual or social group to relative powerlessness or, indeed, to power, and it critiqued the legitimacy of this. The critical paradigm proved most relevant to the study because its objective was to interrogate the extent to which pedagogic practices can be transformed to bring about socio-economic redress enshrined in most progressive constitutions such as South Africa’s.

#### 4. Methodology

The qualitative research design informed the study because of the need to understand reality among the research participants in the class (Yin, 2014). For the purposes of the study, a mixed-method research approach, and the embedded design, was used. According to Creswell and Clark (2011: 90), the embedded design “is a mixed methods approach where the researcher combines the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data within a traditional quantitative design or qualitative research design”. In addition, Creswell and Clark (2011: 110) conclude that, this is when “the researcher implemented a secondary qualitative strand within a larger quantitative experiment, the qualitative methods occurred during the conduct of the experiment and the qualitative methods occurred during the conduct and understanding of the experiment”. Cohen et al., (2011: 25) consent that mixed-method research addresses both ‘what’ (numerical and qualitative data) and ‘how or why’ (qualitative) type of questions. In addition, Denscombe (2008: 272) suggests that mixed methods research can “increase the accuracy of data; provide a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study than would be yielded by a single approach, thereby overcoming the weaknesses and biases of single approaches; enable the research to develop the analysis and build on the original data”. More so the study intended to grasp the events in the learners’ lives in school and how their backgrounds permeate on their literacy development (Yin, 2015). Further the study intended to demonstrate how RtL principles democratise the learning environment during the learning process (Rose, 2005). To get an informed background of the classes, I interviewed the deputy principal, who gave an insightful explanation thereof. Noteworthy information from the interview included the fact that the DBE was slacking in its staffing duties, because it had not provided a teacher for English and others, a situation that lasted three years. He also attributed the non-attendance rates and drug abuse to the lack of teachers. He confided that this was a source of demotivation for the learners. Again, he confided that the class was of repeaters and young mothers whom the majority were non-readers. It is upon this premise that I was given this class as it was the worst affected to be my research class. Data was generated through document analysis. The documents analysed and used were department of education curriculum documents, learners’ written work. In addition, structured interviews were used as additional data generation tools. Adding on, I had a journal which I recorded emerging issues or observations. The marks of students were statistically analysed, processed and presented as bar graph for accessible interpretation. The bar graphs were easy to follow to observe the level of literacy development during RtL intervention. Interviews were coded and themed. Interviews were a follow up to the marks. Interviews helped in getting clarity that RtL was the source of literacy development. This was an important point towards validating RtL. The research 18 participants did not receive any form of intervention outside school or within as established from the interviews. Again, these are learners who came from disadvantaged backgrounds who had limited financial resources and could not afford extra payment for extra

classes. My personal world view had minimum negative impact on my research task. My personal background as a former teacher and having shifted to a different position was insignificant instead it enabled me to remain alert to my research objectives. According to (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013) “positionality reflects the position that the researcher has chosen to adopt within a given study” (p.71). For this research I was ethical in my conduct with participants. The content I was using was from their curriculum and all interventions were carried out during normal schools. In addition, I allowed myself to be subjected to the DoBE of South Africa checks and balances such as lesson observation, book inspection, examination moderation and all the quality assurance process prescribed by Umalusi the South African examination board. Against this background my positionality was neutralised neither did it have an impact on my research and if it was their it was insignificant. The school under investigation was marginalised during the apartheid regime and remains under-resourced and poverty-stricken after 24 years of democracy. The learners came from the township slums where the primary focus is survival. Drugs find their way into the school and the learners trade with fellow learners. It is worrisome and demoralising to find a child as young as twelve years old already hooked on drugs and worse learners have insufficient books to advance their learning. The behaviour of the learners seemed to share the same 19 characteristics with the learners Rose identified in rural Australia who were dejected, frustrated, drug addicted, desperate and had lost hope. It was against these factors that the research came with a transformative agenda to redress the injustices meted out on the school-going children in a South African township school by the DoBE. The injustices were those of not providing teachers to teach the learners and non-availability of textbooks. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) affirm that critical research aims at eliminating injustices in society and addressing inequalities especially related to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, poverty, education, and other sections of society that are marginalised. The agenda of this research was to bring about social justice and equality to the deprived child who was in an underprivileged school, coming from a disadvantaged home. The proof for the authentication of the claim alluded to in the previous sentence cannot be made available because it is classified learners’ information. Therefore, the intervention aimed at bringing about emancipation through literacy and learning skills for life-long learning. Pinto (2000: 13) suggests that in such research, “the researcher is a facilitator (model), catalyst, and change agent rather than assuming dominatory or controlling positions”. The grade ten learners who were the research presented many challenges such as a high rate of absenteeism, prolonged sickness or pregnancy. To give more credibility to critical pedagogy, subjective epistemology was also used. Subjective epistemology chronicles that reality is negotiated based on the experience of the participants involved. For instance, in this study, success or a lack thereof was a result of a variety of factors such as prolonged sickness or going on maternity leave for instance three of my female participants had to take maternity leave and one girl had to 20 periodically attend chemotherapy sessions because she had cancer. Success was measured because of the research participants (learners) being present in class doing what was expected as was the case with most of the learners who succeeded. They were in class every day on time, receiving the right instruction and doing the work that was expected of them. The learners were engaged with the researchers on a personal level and their trials and tribulations were understood, which facilitated the necessary and appropriate intervention within the Reading to Learn pedagogy. The interaction was carried out through semistructured interviews because they assisted in establishing some extra and intimate information that could not be deciphered through written work or marks. This assisted in narrowing the gap that was between the top, the average, and the lower achievers. For the purposes of the study, a mixed-method research approach, and the embedded design, was used. According to Creswell and Clark (2011: 90), the embedded design “is a mixed methods approach where the researcher combines the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data within a traditional quantitative design or qualitative research design”. The diagram below is a summary of how data was generated.

**Mixed methods typology**



The intervention was informed by RtL principles that were proved to accelerate literacy development (Rose,

2005) for marginalised learners who in this case were my research participants. Crucial to the research was the collection and analysis of data (pre-intervention), on the one hand, and qualitative data collection and analysis (post-intervention), informed by RtL principles which was the intervention pedagogy and on the other, to interface with a qualitative process. This was a mechanism to establish trustworthiness. This sequence was repeated before, during and after the curriculum intervention to allow for comparison of variances between baseline data and study outcomes. The study was a quantitative data generation process, and its primary purpose was to analyse in a dialectical way, the correlation between the teaching of reading and the improvement of the learners' academic performance in English First Additional Language.

Therefore, data was generated both sequentially and concurrently because of the two phases (*before* and *after*), but also concurrently because of the data that was generated in the intervention process. Qualitative data generation and analysis was done through interviews with learners who were research participants, and by reading their written work and awarding marks using the systemic functional linguistics analytical tool attached below and quantitative data generation and analysis occurred through the recording of learners' marks from assignments, tests and exams, so this process described the continuum of before, during and after.

The analytical tool below is used as follows: if the student meets the criterion at the highest level expected for her school stage it will score 3. If there is no evidence of that criterion, it will score 0. If there is evidence but it is weak, it will score 1. If it is stronger but not at the top standard for the stage, it will score 2 (Rose, 2018).

**Systemic Functional Analytical Tool for learners' work (Research participants).**

	<b>R2L Descriptor</b>	<b>Score up to 3.</b>
Genre	Well-developed interpretation of texts or theme.	
Stages	Well-developed Evaluation, Synopsis, Re-evaluation	
Phases	Evaluation: identifies theme in texts synopsis: examples of theme in each text, topic, point linking back, Re-evaluation: restates themes, concludes with evaluation.	
Field	Good discussion of texts.	
Tenor	How the reader engages with the story through reactions and reflections	
Mode	How highly written is the language for the particular age and grade	
Lexis	How adequate and good is the vocabulary in used.	
Appraisal	How good is the conscious control of appraisal, such as feelings, judgments of people and appreciation of things and places.	
Conjunction	Are logical relations between each step clear, e.g. shifts back and forward in time, comparisons, cause?	
Reference	Is it clear who or what is referred to, e.g. in questions or dialogue.	
Grammar	Are the grammatical conventions of English written accurately? Is there an appropriate variety of sentence and word group structures for the school age, or is it too simple?	
Spelling	How accurately spelt are core words (frequent) and non-core words (less frequent)?	
Punctuation	How appropriately and accurately is punctuation used?	
Presentation	How legible is the writing? Is the layout clear? Are paragraphs used if need be? Are illustrations/diagrams used appropriately?	
Total		

**Source: Assessing Writing: Reading to Learn Accelerating and closing the gap: (Rose, 2018).**

The research process was informed by the main research question (a) and sub research questions i and ii.

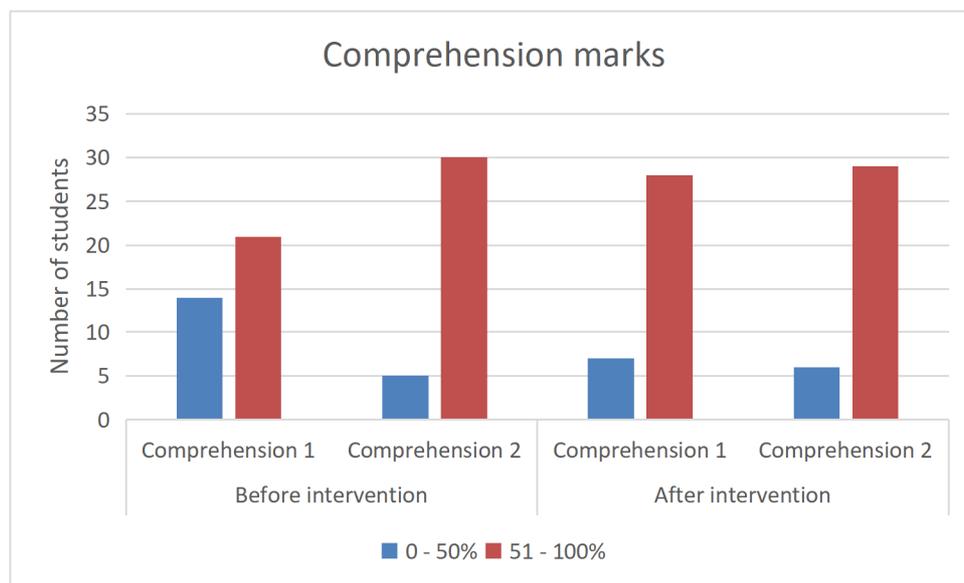
- (a)What role does the pedagogic approach informed by Reading to Learn Methodology play in developing Grade 10 learners' ability to learn from reading, read to learn, and turn what they read to written texts?
  - (i)How do learners who are the study participants in this research experience the pedagogic approach informed by the principles of Reading to Learn Methodology?
  - (ii)Why do learners who are the study participants in this research experience the pedagogic approach informed by the principles of Reading to Learn Methodology the way they do?

Similarly, as predominantly quantitative, this study's overall purpose was answered in the evaluative exams of the Grade 10 class. The *what* and *how* research questions of this research yielded data that demonstrated the embeddedness of the answers (and context of participants) in the bigger experiment, the expression which was manifested in the exam results. The *what* and the *why* questions were only included in the research because exam results could not definitively answer them, so they needed to be couched in the broader quantitative research process.

**The study’s findings**

**Table 5: Marks for comprehension before and after intervention**

	Before intervention		After intervention	
	Comprehension 1	Comprehension 2	Comprehension 1	Comprehension 2
0 - 50%	14	5	7	6
51 - 100%	21	30	28	29



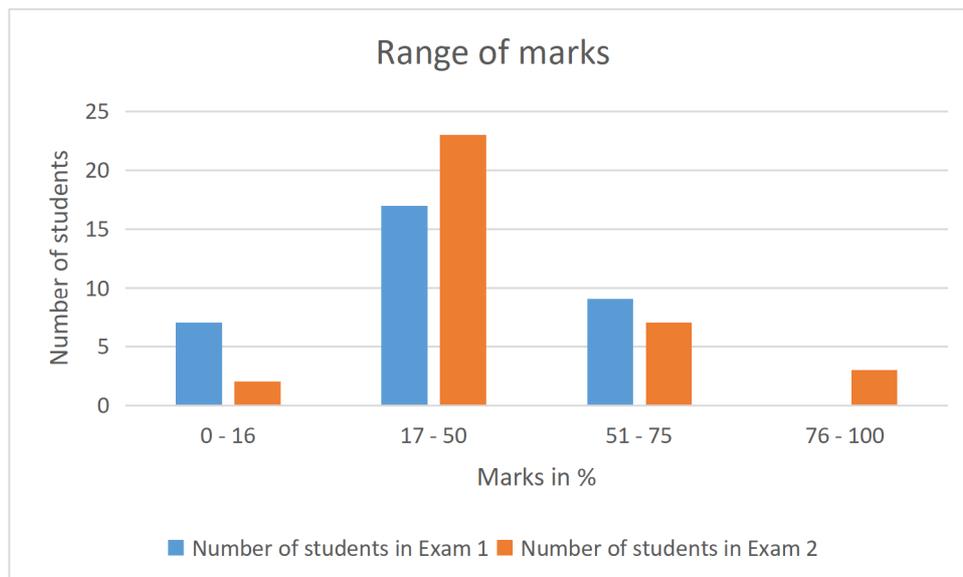
**Figure 2: Comparison of comprehension marks before and after RtL intervention**

After teaching and instruction of comprehension passages informed by RtL methodology, progress in comprehension was experienced as illustrated by the marks in Table 5 and Figure 2. This reading to learn intervention method was a daily teaching pedagogy for the entire academic year because I was present everyday teaching. Against this background the RtL cycle was implemented weekly because every unit or component had to be completed unless there were unforeseen circumstances beyond the teacher-researcher’s control.

A comprehension exercise can give an accurate picture of the reading capabilities of the learners because it is a product of listening comprehension and decoding. The first comprehension was administered equitably yet 14 learners could not manage 50%. In the second comprehension exercise, five were under 50%. When the intervention was implemented, several comprehensions exercises were administered, and the two final evaluative comprehension exercises established the following: for comprehension 1, seven scored under 50%; and for comprehension 2, six scored under 50%. There was progression in reading and interpreting information from the passage. The reason for the repetition of the comprehension was to authenticate the effective role played by the RtL pedagogy. These findings were authenticated by the interviews with the research participants (learners). I asked them if they did not attend extra classes and one of the responses which represents the research participants pointed out “*Sir, my grandmother who looks after me survive on social grants. She cannot get money for extra classes. I utilise my teachers and my time at school.* This was done to determine validity in data collection. Selinger and Shohany (1989: 95) acknowledge that, “validity in data collection implies that findings truly represent the phenomenon being measured”. The results must not be a once-off finding and be primarily repeatable. Hence, after the second exercise, the findings for the comprehension were found to be conforming. Therefore, because of RtL pedagogy, the marks in Table 6 and further illustrated in Figure 3 exhibit significant progress in comparison to the period before intervention. I trust this was a not a normal development as some may purport, because the research participants were none readers before the intervention. It is upon this basis that the argument of a normal development is dismissed. Again, as highlighted earlier the learners pronounced that their ability to be fluent readers and being able to read to learn was a result of Reading to Learn intervention

**Table 6: Examination 1 and 2 marks after the inception of intervention**

Marks (%)	Number of students in Exam 1	Number of students in Exam 2
0 – 16	7	2
17 – 50	17	23
51 – 75	9	7
76 – 100	0	3



**Figure 3: Examination marks during and after intervention**

The marks illustrated above are indicative of gains made because of the RtL methodology because this is the only approach that the learners were exposed to towards literacy development. In the first examination, administered three months after the inception of the intervention, there were seven learners whose performance was dismal. Their marks were between 0 – 16%. After six months of multiple exposures to RtL, the number of learners who were within the range of 0 – 16% had decreased to two. Similarly, learners within the 17 – 50% range were 17 initially but in the second examination the number increased to 23 learners, which is an indication of gains made in the use of RtL. In the first evaluation examination the number of learners within the 51 – 75 % range was nine and in the second examination it was seven. Lastly in the first evaluation examination there were no learners within the 76 – 100% and in the second evaluation examination there were three, which is testimony to the gains made because of RtL pedagogy.

## 5. Conclusion

The RtL pedagogy can achieve commendable results if deserved consideration is accorded to it and brought into action across the curriculum. It may bring about the desired improvements in language and literacy skills, which are the basics as pronounced in the CAPS curriculum. Rose's RtL has proven to possess the capacity to bridge the gap between disadvantaged and privileged learners by providing them with the same skills that will enable them to read at grade- and age-appropriate levels. The teaching informed by RtL may usher in a new democratic dispensation in the classroom where learners are afforded with equitable opportunities towards access to attainment of literacy. RtL has proven to have comprehensive interventions that assists marginalised learners.

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