



MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



**CONTRACT FARMING AND ITS IMPACT ON THE TOBACCO FARMERS'
LIVELIHOODS: A CASE STUDY OF KAROI 2004-2014**

BY

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ACCEPTANCE PAGE

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommended to the Midlands State University for acceptance a dissertation entitled: Achievement of automaticity: An uphill task for grade two learners in Vutika Cluster in Mberengwa District in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe, submitted by HUNGWE LLOYD in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education Degree in Educational Psychology.

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DEDICATION

To my beloved wife Simbisai Mpofo and children Charity, Walter, Christine Cherish and Prosper Laureate.

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ABSTRACT

The research sought to establish challenges associated with the achievement of automaticity at grade two level with the view to find possible strategies to circumvent the established challenges, consequently enhancing reading and school performance. The study was necessitated by the fact that eleven subjects out of twelve in the Zimbabwean Primary School Curriculum are done in English, for this reason the achievement of automaticity was considered paramount. The study was also necessitated by the outcry of grade three to seven teachers in Vutika Cluster on the alarming number of non-readers in schools. More often than not research on the achievement of automaticity has focused on developed countries and urban settings leaving rural learners' needs seemingly unexplored. The prevalence of non-readers in developed countries left the researcher with wonder as to the state of affairs in rural settings. Literature revealed that non-readers are prevalent across the world whether the country is poor or rich. Reviewed literature also revealed that learners have diverse challenges in their quest to achieve automaticity in English reading. Some strategies need to be identified to make the challenges surmountable.

The research study employed the mixed methods approach and a descriptive survey design. The population comprised of one hundred and ninety grade two learners, eight grade two teachers and three teachers-in-charge in Vutika Cluster. In terms of learners 25% (49 learners) constituted the sample. Teachers and teachers-in-charge were chosen using purposive sampling. Eight grade two teachers and three teachers-in-charge voluntarily participated in the research. Data were collected using three research instruments namely a questionnaire for teachers, an interview guide for teachers-in-charge and a sample of learners' scores which were averaged. Data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques.

The study found that non-readers were in the range 20% to 30% in the schools. The study concluded that non-readers are really a reality in schools. The research study established nineteen challenges that are associated with achievement of automaticity at grade two level. It was therefore concluded that grade two learners face challenges in striving to achieve automaticity. The research established twelve strategies that may be employed in helping learners achieve automaticity in English reading. It was therefore concluded that the reading challenges can be surmountable.

The study recommended that:

- Teachers need to invent ways of dealing with large classes which are a reality in Vutika Cluster.
- Teachers ought to treat learners equally and expect positive from them since they possess the language acquisition device (LAD).
- Teachers need to recommend for Basic Education Assistance Module learners from impoverished environments.
- Teachers need to devise and implement compensatory programs to cover learners from poverty-stricken homes.
- Teachers need to assign homework to maximize reading practice.
- Teachers ought to create a conducive reading environment and culture
- Teachers and teachers-in-charge need to conscientise parents on their roles regarding achievement of automaticity so that they actively contribute to their learners' achievement.
- Teachers-in-charge need to run staff development sessions on how learners can be best assisted to achieve automaticity.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

In Zimbabwean primary schools eleven subjects out of twelve are learnt in English, hence striving to achieve automaticity is considered paramount. Fluency in reading and comprehension greatly depends on achievement of automaticity. The study therefore explored challenges faced by grade two learners in their quest to achieve automaticity. This chapter focuses on the background of the study, statement of the problem, research question, sub-questions, the purpose of the study, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations and definition of terms. The chapter ends with a summary.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

One of the chief needs of learners is achievement of automaticity in English reading because English is an official language in Zimbabwe. Pressly and Woloshyn (2005) posit that the majority of learners make a shift from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn' around second or third grade. In support of the above the grade two primary English syllabus in Zimbabwe stipulates that the grade two teaching should aim to create competent and independent readers. It is for the above reasons that achievement of automaticity in English reading is therefore paramount at grade two level because it is at this level through grade three that authorities expect it to be achieved.

Automaticity is the fast, effortless word recognition that comes with a great deal of practice (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2012). The majority of learners make a shift from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn' around second or third grade (Pressly & Woloshyn, 2005). Ormrod (2013) concurs with the above assertion when he argues that in America automaticity is achieved at the second and third grade. The grade two primary English syllabus in Zimbabwe stipulates that the grade two teaching should aim to create competent and independent readers. The biggest obstacle to proficient reading for many students is their lack of automaticity or speed in understanding words (Text Project, 2015).

In a survey study carried out in six European Union (EU) countries by Elena, Leo, Daisy & Luis (2011) a high prevalence of poor reading was reported. In a similar study carried out by Wim, Bouwmans & Broeders (2006) the prevalence of non-readers was found to constitute 20% of the Dutch general elementary education students. Although some of the studies cited do not reveal the actual percentage of non-readers it can be discerned that non-readers are prevalent in developed countries. According to the European Union (EU) Parliament (2015) the EU language policy is that every European citizen should master two other languages in addition to the mother tongue. The EU found that the first language assists in the achievement of automatic reading in the second language.

In a research carried out to find the effects of 'Read Naturally' on reading fluency for students of low socio-economic status (SES) in the United States of America, Gutman (2011) found that the achievement gap in reading between students of low versus high socio-economic status (SES) is detrimental to students of low SES who struggle with

basic reading skills such as fluency. The above studies reveal that there are reading challenges in developed countries which relates to both learners and teachers. In this light the researcher felt intrigued to investigate the state of affairs in rural settings of developing Zimbabwe.

Seyit (2013) carried out a study in Turkey on improvement of reading. The study revealed that unless necessary measures are taken, a learner who cannot read well will not be successful in his or her academic work. Elementary school teachers have a considerable difficulty in diagnosing and remediation of students with reading difficulty and feel incompetent (Seyit, 2013). The study also revealed that most of the learners read at frustration level as opposed to instructional level. In a related study carried out in Spain by Young-Suk (2012) on the relations between automaticity and comprehension the findings showed that word reading automaticity was strongly related to reading comprehension. The referred studies have been carried out in developed countries and in urban settings leaving rural schools uncovered. For this reason this research sought to focus on the rural parts of developing Zimbabwe. A reflection on findings in Asia is imminent.

Li-chun (2015) researched on proficient reading behavior of pre-school going age learners in China and found that automatic reading was positively related to comprehension. Hee (2012) studied the relationship between oral reading fluency in second language reading among high school students in Hawaii, Honolulu in South Korea. Hee found a strong correlation between fluency and comprehension. None of the studies reviewed above studied automaticity in particular but rather studied fluency

which is a higher order skill requiring expression when reading. The cited researches never focused on second grade where automaticity is expected to be achieved. These gaps will be filled by this research as which sought to focus on automaticity only and at second grade only. Having reflected on research findings in Europe and Asia it is imperative to explore research findings in Africa.

Gottesman, Lilacroen&Rotkin (2002) carried out a study to establish the relationship between socio-economic status and reading achievement in Ghana. The study found a high prevalence (60%) of non-readers in socio-economically disadvantaged primarygrade children. A related study on sociology of language by Elizabeth in South Africa (2015) revealed low reading levels among grade four Zulu students. Both studies appear to acknowledge a high prevalence of non-readers. Ameyaw-Akumfi (July, 16) holds that in Ghana the language policy states that English should be used as a medium of instruction from primary with Ghanaian language studied as a compulsory subject to the senior secondary school. South Africa allows a multilingual policy while considering it axiomatic to teach a child in the mother tongue UNICEF, 2003). Elizabeth (2015) carried out a research in South Africa on sociology of language and found that there was a mismatch between language policy and literacy accomplishments. The reviewed controversy in findings intrigued the researcher to establish the obtaining situation in Vutika Cluster regarding the influence of language policy in the achievement of automaticity in English reading. The cited studies do not focus on grade two per se, thereby leaving a gap for this study which focuses on grade two only. From the African

scenario the next paragraph focuses on the Zimbabwean scenario on the prevalence of non-readers in schools. .

The Learning Achievement Tracking (LAT) study carried out in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe in 2010 revealed that 95% of the learners in Manicaland Primary Schools operated below their grade level in English. Zano, Tshabalala, Ncube&Khosi (2015) in their study on challenges faced by rural primary school teachers in teaching English reading in infant classes in Jojo West Cluster in Nkayi District found that high failure rate was a result of high prevalence of non-readers. The above studies reveal high prevalence of reading challenges thereby making the researcher wonder if the state of affairs may be similar in Vutika Cluster. The Jojo West Cluster study focused on teachers only whereas this study focuses on teachers, documentary evidence and learners to allow for triangulation.

In a similar study by Rossman (2007) a positive correlation was revealed between achievement of automaticity and academic success. In keeping with the above findings the Learning Tracking Study conducted in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe in 2010 found a positive correlation between automatic reading and school performance. Zano et al (2015) found that in grades one and two oral language and decoding were significant predictors of comprehension and school performance. The Learning Tracking study cited above took a rather global approach to study the relationship between automaticity and school performance. Foorman, Sarah, Yaacov, Alison & Adrea (2015) carried out a study to establish the relationship between oral language and comprehension. The study found a high prevalence of non-readers in grades one and two consequently

negatively affecting comprehension. It appears the high prevalence of non-readers across the globe is a cause of concern hence the study on challenges faced by grade two learners in striving to achieve automaticity.

In Zimbabwe the Amended Education Act [1] of 2006 states that prior to form one, Shona or Ndebele or English or any local language to be used as a medium of instruction in the seven years of school life. The above policy position is further affirmed by the grade two syllabus document which acknowledges the role of first language in the achievement of automatic reading in the second language. Of the reviewed research none has uniquely focused on the influence of language policy on the achievement of automaticity in the second grade. Zimbabwe's language policy is closely related to language policies in the countries cited above in that it allows for bilingualism. The study seeks to establish if this idea of bilingualism and use of Shona are helping learners achieve automaticity in English in the second grade in Vutika Cluster.

The background given above shows that, more often than not literature chronicles achievement of automaticity in developed countries and urban schools without investigating the state of affairs in developing countries, a scenario which leaves the rural learners' educational needs seemingly unmet. The environment in developed countries such as America and Turkey and the environment in developing countries of which Zimbabwe is no exception are different and let alone Vutika Cluster which is in a rural setting. The study sought to give a voice regarding challenges faced by grade two learners in rural settings. The research findings reviewed above focused on learners

and excluded teachers who are significant in assisting learners achieve automaticity. It is for this reason that this research includes grade two teachers, reading scores of learners and teachers-in-charge to come up with a balanced view. A greater number of these research protocols used experimental and quasi experimental methods hence might have lost depth which will be obtainable in this research which employs mixed methods as its methodology. Most of the studies are carried out in areas where research is a common phenomenon, hence the findings could have been affected by research fatigue. This research focuses on rural schools in Zimbabwe where research is uncommon hence the research is likely to yield authentic data.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is an outcry on the alarming number of non-readers in grades three to seven in the three primary schools of Vutika Cluster in Mberengwa District in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwean Primary Schools eleven subjects out of twelve are learnt in English, hence striving to achieve automaticity is considered paramount. Automaticity precedes fluency, comprehension and school performance, hence all other tests depend on its achievement. It is for these reasons that the researcher sought to investigate challenges faced by grade two learners in striving to achieve automaticity in English reading in Vutika Cluster.

1.4 The study was guided by the following research questions:

1.4.1 MAIN QUESTION

What are the challenges associated with achievement of automaticity in English reading at grade two level in Vutika Cluster in Mberengwa District?

1.4.2 SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main question was addressed by the following sub-research questions:

1. What is the prevalence of non-readers at grade two level in Vutika Cluster?
2. What challenges do grade two learners face in Vutika Cluster in striving to achieve automaticity in English reading?
3. What strategies can be used to help grade two learners achieve automaticity?

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main thrust of the study was to establish the challenges faced by grade two learners in achieving automaticity in English reading in Vutika Cluster in Mberengwa District in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe in order to improve the achievement of automaticity in reading.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is significant in that it exposed the researcher to the challenges and scientific rigor associated with social sciences research, thereby enhancing the researcher's professional growth through hands on experience and active participation as well as interaction with experts supervising the research. The research is important

in that it enabled the researcher to fulfill the Midlands State University requirements for certification of Master of Education in Educational Psychology Degree.

The research is of utmost importance in that it focused on the challenges faced in achieving automaticity in three rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. Most of the researches have been conducted in developed countries and in urban settings, for this reason the research would benefit future researchers since it adds to the body of knowledge and literature regarding challenges faced by grade two learners in achievement of automaticity in English reading in some rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. Rural schools and rural students differ in a number of ways with urban schools and students. It is in this light that the researcher wishes to bring to light the challenges faced by grade two learners in achieving automaticity consequently creating another platform from which future researchers can view the concept of automaticity in English reading.

The study is significant in that it would help teachers to review and reflect on how they initiate learners into reading, the support and motivation they give as well as the methods, practices and strategies they employ in helping learners achieve automaticity. Through participation teachers may realize the need to make their classroom environments conducive for achievement of automaticity. The challenges unveiled would be an eye opener to school administration and may trigger them to set up measures to ensure that automaticity is achieved to a greater extent. The upcoming segment focuses on the assumptions of the study.

1.7 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The study assumed that:

- Grade two students in Vutika Cluster are having challenges in achieving automaticity in English reading.
- Teachers are facing problems with struggling readers and non-readers.
- Grade two students who are not able to read have challenges in other subjects.
- There are strategies that may be employed to help most of the learners achieve automatic reading in English. Having highlighted the assumptions of the study is prudent to shift focus to the delimitations of the study.

1.8 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research was undertaken in the infant education department and was confined to Vutika Cluster in Mberengwa District in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. The study focused on grade two students only and did not consider other grades in the infant and junior departments. The research focused on achievement of automaticity in English reading only but not other languages and skills such as fluency and comprehension. The research did not seek to establish cause and effect but rather described the challenges faced by grade two students in achievement of automaticity in English reading. Having brought to light the delimitations of the study the next paragraph focuses on the limitations of the study.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research study covered second grade only and was confined to Vutika Cluster only. The results would not be generalizable to other infant grades in the cluster neither would they be generalizable to other schools in other clusters in the district, province

and the nation at large. Despite this limitation the findings are invaluable within the cluster and the findings may be compared with findings from other clusters. This research study may initiate related research in other schools providing basis for comparison which may result in refinement of theories related to achievement of automaticity. The researcher minimized transport costs through utilization of the Wi-Fi system in the sister school which is a stone's throw from Mpandashango Primary School where the researcher works. Teachers may be unwilling to divulge information. To alleviate this limitation the researcher succinctly explained the purpose of the research, assured participants of confidentiality and informed that the findings of the research are used for academic purposes only. Having articulated the limitations of the study the upcoming segment is committed to definition of key terms used in the study.

1.10 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms were defined as they are used in the study:

Automaticity – Is the fast, effortless word recognition that comes with a great deal of practice (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2012).

Prevalence – is frequency of occurrence (Woolfolk, 2013). In the study focus is on how common non-readers in grade two.

Challenges – are hindrances or stumbling blocks that seek to stifle and frustrate an enterprise (Capel, 2005). In the context of this study challenges are obstacles that hinder learners from achieving automaticity in English reading.

Performance – is the manifestation of a skill (Woolfolk, 2013). In the context of the study it is succeeding in achieving automaticity in English reading.

Strategies – are detailed plans for achieving success (Capel, 2005). In this research a strategy is a plan to achieve automaticity.

1.11 SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher discussed the background which influenced the researcher to investigate challenges associated with the achievement of automaticity in English reading. Statement of the problem, research questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study, delimitation and limitations were articulated. Key terms in the study were defined. The focus of chapter two is a review of theoretical frameworks and literature related to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter articulates the theoretical frameworks that guided this study. The theoretical frameworks include the behaviorist theory of B.F. Skinner on language acquisition and development, the nativist theory by Chomsky and the interactionist theory on language development by Levy Vygotsky. Each theoretical framework will be highlighted with specifications on how it relates to this study. The relationship and controversies between theories are brought to light.

Having articulated the theoretical frameworks that guided the research, the researcher proceeds to review literature related to challenges faced by grade two learners in striving to achieve automaticity in English reading at grade two level. The related literature is reviewed under the following headings: the relationship between automaticity and school performance, the prevalence of non-readers in schools, challenges faced by grade two learners in achieving automaticity and the strategies that may be used to assist learners achieve automaticity in English reading. Literature is reviewed starting with findings in developed countries, findings in the African and Asian continent and the Zimbabwean context. Similarities and controversies are highlighted taking cognizance of the gaps in literature that this research aims to fill. The chapter unfolds with a summary of the main issues raised in the chapter.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

This research was guided by three theories on language acquisition and development namely: the behaviorist theory of B.F Skinner, the nativist theory by Chomsky and the interactionist theory by Levy Vygotsky. An overview of each theoretical framework is given and the researcher proceeds to highlight how these theories relate to the study. Similarities and controversies between the theories are brought to light.

Ormrod(2012:31-34) highlights the following behaviorist assumptions which guided Skinner in his theory of operant conditioning: Firstly principles of learning should apply equally to different behaviors and to a variety of animal species (equipotentiality). Secondly, learning processes can be studied most objectively when the focus of study is on stimuli and response. Thirdly internal processes are largely excluded from scientific study because we can't directly observe and measure them. Fourthly that learning involves behavior change and lastly that organisms are blank slates (tabula rasa).

These principles relate to the study in many ways. The printed word is the stimulus and reading is the response which is measured through reading tests and exercises by grade two teachers. Reading in itself is an observable and measurable variable. The organism is the grade two learner who elicits the response (reading) as provided by the environment. Learners grow up indifferent environments, developed countries, developing countries, rural or urban and impoverished environments which affect availability and exposure to reading models and material. Some learners particularly in Europe are born English speaking while learners in other parts of the world including

Zimbabwe take English as their second language. The differences in environments may mean that learners may achieve automaticity in English reading at different levels. The research ultimately focused on achievement of automaticity (observable behavior) while recognizing the presence of certain conditions within the learner. This is in tandem with the neo-behaviorists who argue that mediating between a stimulus and a response there is an organism hence neo-behaviorists are referred to as stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) theorists (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Behavior change is expected in the achievement of automaticity in that learners are expected to achieve an observable change in striving to or achievement of automaticity in English reading in Vutika Cluster.

Skinner cited in Santrock (2003) argues that reinforcement and shaping play significant roles in learning. Instead of using the term rewards Skinner uses the term reinforcement - a term that avoids the implication that a behavior-increasing consequence necessarily involves a pleasant stimulus (Ormrod 2014). Punishment is another stimulus which Skinner believed increased the frequency of the response. The table below illustrates the relationship between forms of reinforcement and punishment.

Table 2.1: Contrasting positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and punishment.

Stimulus	Pleasant	Aversive
Is presented after a response	Positive reinforcement (response increases)	Punishment 1 (response decreases)
Removed after a response	Punishment 2 (response decreases)	Negative reinforcement (response increases)

(Adapted from Ormrod 2012:57)

Schedules of reinforcement namely: continuous, fixed ratio, variable ratio, fixed interval and variable interval are articulated. Skinner focused on ways in which certain consequences increase the frequency of voluntary behaviors. In a classroom setting teacher attention, approval and praise can be powerful reinforcers (Thompson & Bayham (2010). In a classroom situation we find learners who voluntarily read and these certainly need to be reinforced so that the frequency of reading increases thereby facilitating the achievement of automaticity. Skinner cited in Ormrod (2012) argues that teachers can promote behavioral momentum by assigning easy or enjoyable tasks that lead naturally into more complex and potentially frustrating ones. Skinner seems to concur with Bruner (2005) when he articulates the need for proper sequencing of reading materials in a bid to help learners achieve automaticity.

Skinner's theory is relevant to the study in that reading is influenced by the environment, creating conducive environment for reading, reinforcing learners, shaping and sequencing reading materials are all involved in helping learners achieve automatic

reading. Having explored the behaviorist view it is imperative to delve into the nativist theory on language acquisition and development.

Santrock (2002:281) says, "...Chomsky (1957) believes humans are biologically pre-wired to learn language at a certain time and in a certain way." Children are born with some predispositions that assist them in acquiring whichever language they hear spoken around them (Chomsky in Ormrod 2012). Thus the nativist theory stresses innate biological determinants of language acquisition – the influence of nature rather than nurture. The proposition that learners are born with a language acquisition device (LAD) seems to suggest that all learners can achieve automaticity in English reading since it is one of the languages. Inherent in the nativist theory is the optimal use of critical period hence the investigation of challenges faced by grade two learners in achieving automaticity since grade two learners fall within the confines of the critical period in language learning.

The nativists view the learner as an active participant in language acquisition as opposed to the passive role assumed of the learner by behaviorists. In this light Papalia et al (2002:170) say, "Unlike Skinner's learning theory, nativism emphasizes the active role of the learner." The nativist theory concurs with the neo-behaviorists who acknowledge the role of the organism (learner) mediating between the stimulus–response. Thus nativist theory is relevant to the study in that it suggests active reading by learners to help them achieve automaticity. The nativists seem to acknowledge the role of the environment in nourishing the predispositions to achieve automaticity that learners are born with as they assert that the LAD enable the learner to learn any

language that the environment provides. This study seeks to synthesize compatible elements from each of the theories so that they complement each other and offset each other's weaknesses.

Both theories have received criticisms. Ormrod (2012) contends that current theories place stress on the innate capacities learners bring to the task of learning language. Papalia *et al* (2002) argue that the nativist approach does not fully explain precisely how the LAD operates. On the other hand Newcombe cited in Ormrod (2012) posits that developmental psycholinguists argue that observation and imitation do not fully explain language acquisition as noted in some of a child's first two word utterances which are unique and creative combinations that adults are unlikely to use. From the above it appears neither Skinner's operant conditioning theory nor Chomsky's nativist theory can be a panacea for explaining language acquisition and development. The above scenario seems to invite an eclectic or interactionist approach to help learners achieve automaticity. There is thus need to intertwine nurture and nature to help learners achieve automaticity. In this light the next paragraph reviews Levy Vygotsky's interactionist theory in language acquisition and development.

Vygotsky (1962) came up with an interactionist theory in which both nurture and nature are recognizable in terms of their contribution to language development (in this research development of automaticity by grade two learners in Vutika Cluster). Vygotsky cited in Santrock (2003) knowledge is situated and collaborative – that knowledge is distributed among people, environments which include objects, artifacts, tools, books and communities in which people live. The above seem to suggest that there ought to an

active interaction between the learner and his reading environment (models and reading materials) to achieve automaticity. Pair work, imitation of models, group work and interaction with media are teaching methods implied in the above assertions. Vygotsky referred to the difference between what the learner can do on his own and what can be accomplished with some assistance as the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Thus learners regarding this research study may have words they are able to read alone and those which they may read with the assistance of the teacher or more knowledgeable others (MKO). In support of the foregoing Snowman & McCown (2012) hold that scaffolding techniques that are likely to help students traverse their ZPD include prompts, modeling, rewards, feedback and cognitive structuring.

Snowman & McCown (2012) posit that as students approach the upper limit of their ZPD, their behavior becomes smoother, more internalized and more automatized. The foregoing implies that role models, dialogue, practice, confirmation, peer tutoring, collaborative reading and scaffolding are paramount. Since learning is context bound (Vygotsky) the implication is that reading words and materials ought to be drawn from children's experiences and environment. Woolfolk (2013) says, "Vygotsky assumed that every function in child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level and later on the individual level; first between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological). The above assertion relate to the study in that at first grade two learners may need the help of models (teachers or peers) to recognize words then with practice they may be able to recognize the words by themselves thereby achieving automaticity.

Woolfolk (2013) argues that Vygotsky believes that learning is an active process that does not need to wait for readiness. Vygotsky appears to suggest that teachers ought to teach reading readiness to help learners achieve automaticity. Vygotsky in Santrock (2003) maintains that children have rich, unsystematic and spontaneous concepts which meet with skilled helper's systematic, logical and rational concepts making the child's concepts become more systematic, logical and rational. Vygotsky's idea of the presence of unsystematic concepts in learners seems to support Chomsky's idea of the presence of a LAD. Vygotsky's theory is relevant to the study in that it highlights the crucial role played by teachers, MKO and parents in helping learners achieve automaticity in English reading. Vygotsky concurs with Skinner on the role of nurture in language learning, with Vygotsky going further to acknowledge the role of culture and nature.

Vygotsky's theory appears to explain better how learners can be assisted to achieve automaticity because the theory recognizes the role of both nurture and nature. Despite the explanations put forward by the above theorists, indications are that not all learners achieve automaticity at grade two level hence the necessity to investigate the challenges faced by grade two learners. A solution has not yet been found! The forthcoming paragraphs review research findings relating to prevalence of non-readers in schools.

2.3 PREVALENCE OF NON-READERS IN SCHOOLS

Ise *et al* (2011) conducted a study in six European Union (EU) countries (Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands and Portugal) on support systems for poor readers and found a high prevalence of poor reading ability in the current EU members,

a situation Ise et al averred demonstrated the need for educational reforms. The high prevalence of non-readers in English speaking countries leaves the researcher with wonder as the state of affairs in developing countries particularly the impoverished rural schools such as those in Vutika Cluster where English is a second language (L2). The National Research Council of the United States in 1998 conducted a research entitled “Start early, Finish strong” found that most limited-English-proficient students are in the elementary grades and approximately 40% of these students were born in the United States. In a related study carried out by Wim *et al* (2006) on the prevalence of poor reading in Dutch elementary education, the findings were that 20% of the participants were identified as poor readers. If 20% were poor readers in a developed country the researcher eagers to investigate what the situation is like in rural Vutika Cluster, in developing Zimbabwe. Prevalence of non-readers in Africa is the focus of the next paragraph.

In a study carried out by Kewaza and Welch (2013) on their investigation on the effects of big class size on teaching reading in the primary classes in Kampala found high prevalence of non-readers in big, crowded class sizes. Kewaza and Welch further revealed the following challenges: Firstly, overreliance on chorus reading as a teaching method and lack of individual attention from the teacher; secondly inadequate reading materials for learners coupled with irregular supply of manila and markers for making reading materials and that the teaching-learning of reading in the lower classes was substantially affected negatively by the large classes. The researcher eagers to find out

if the prevalence rates in Vutika Cluster are similar to the ones reviewed above. The focus of the next paragraph is on the prevalence of non-readers in Zimbabwe.

The Learning Achievement Tracking Study carried out in Manicaland in 2010 revealed that 95% of the learners in the primary school operated below their current grade level in English. These findings make the researcher wonder if similar results will be obtainable in Vutika Cluster. In a related study carried out in Nkayi District (Jojo West), Zano, Tshabalala, Ncube and Khosa (2015) researched on challenges faced by rural primary school teachers in teaching infant classes reading created a cause of concern in many societies as the high rate of illiteracy continues to affect performance of learners. The above referred study focused on teachers only as its research participants, in this research focus is on both teachers and students to get a balanced view. No research of this kind has been conducted in Vutika Cluster hence the researcher seeks to establish challenges in the mentioned cluster. In the next paragraphs a review of the challenges faced in achieving automaticity in English reading is undertaken.

2.4 CHALLENGES FACED IN ACHIEVING AUTOMATICITY

2.4.1 The challenge of teacher –pupil ratio

Geraldine in his 2001 study on teacher–pupil ratio of 1:20 policy in New Zealand found that teacher-pupil ratio of 1:20 enhanced student reading programs, teacher effectiveness and teacher-student relationship. Similar findings came from Wisberg & Castiglione on their 2009 study of the impact of a reduction of teacher-pupil ratio in grade one and two in New York. The study revealed that a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:20 at grade two improved reading and test results. In agreement with the above findings

Johnston (2006) in his research on the relationship between reduced teacher-pupil ratio and practice conclude that small classes of about fifteen students and regular size of about twenty-five students enhance students' learning and achievement of students than the experience of proportionally large class. Having reviewed research findings in developed countries the researcher shifts attention to research findings on teacher-pupil ratio in Africa.

Kewaza and Welch (2013) found that high teacher-pupil ratio negatively affected the reading performance of learners and the attitude of teachers in Kampala. Anatomy Beverley *et al* (2008) in their study on: spotlight on Africa found that the staff to student ratio to be relatively high in Africa. High teacher- student -ratio are reported in South Africa in a research conducted by Christa and Johnnice (2007) on teacher-student ratio. The literature reviewed concurs that teacher pupil ratios are high, negatively affecting the achievement of automaticity. The researcher seeks to find if similar results will be yielded in Vutika Cluster which is in different setting from the settings in the reviewed studies. Research findings on teacher-pupil ratio in Zimbabwe obtain focus in the forthcoming paragraph.

In Zimbabwe the teacher pupil ratio for the second grade is 1:40 (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education). The teacher-pupil in Zimbabwe is double that of New Zealand and that of the United States which stand at 1:20. In the face of the differences in teacher-pupil ratios the researcher wishes to establish the effects of the teacher pupil ratio of 1:40 on the achievement of automaticity in the second grade. Zano *et al* (2015) found that high teacher-pupil ratio in Zimbabwean Primary Schools negatively affected

the achievement of automaticity in the infant classes of Nkayi District in Matebeleland North Province of Zimbabwe.

2.4.2 The challenge of poverty in relation to achievement of automaticity

The National Research Council of the US 1997 found that learners from low income families and attend high-poverty schools are at high risk of reading failure. In another research by Ruth, Gottesman and Rotkin (2002) study on urban second grade profile of good and poor readers, found that learners from low socio-economic status were more likely to become poor readers than their more affluent counterparts. In the fore-mentioned study 60% of the poor readers were Hispanic, 27% were black and 13% were white. In a related study Doctor Conaty (2014) on his study on reading excellence program in Washington D.C revealed that low-income children experience reading failure at higher rates than their more affluent peers. Having reviewed the scenario in the West focus is now directed towards research findings in the African continent.

Tricia (2011) in her study on effects of low socio-economic status (SES) on reading in Ghana found that learners from lowSESstruggle with basic reading skills such as automaticity and fluency. In a related study Kewaza and Welch (2013) studied challenges emanating from large classes in teaching reading in primary classes in Kampala (Uganda) found that there was poor provision of reading materials including manila and markers due to poverty in the school as well as in the learners' homes. The two studies took a global approach by focusing on several grades. This study seeks to restrict focus on the second grade where initially automaticity is expected to be

achieved. In the upcoming paragraph the researcher reviews poverty as a challenge in achievement of automaticity in Zimbabwe.

Zano *et al* (2015) in their study on challenges faced by rural primary school teachers in teaching reading to infant classes in Jojo West Cluster in Nkayi District revealed that poor home backgrounds did not assist learners achieve automaticity. In a related study Kanyongo, Certo and Launcelot (2006) used regression analysis to establish the relationship between home background and reading achievement in Zimbabwe. The findings were that a proxy for SES was the strongest predictor of reading achievement. The first research used teachers and left out learners whose performance may not be ignored. The second research was too broad focusing on the whole country. This research will focus on a specific cluster and will include learners' performance. The forthcoming paragraphs review literature relating to the grade at which automaticity is expected to be achieved in different parts of the world.

2.4.3 The challenge of grade at which automaticity expected to be achieved in schools.

The majority of students make the shift from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn' around second or third grade. Learners begin to read more fluently in the second grade (US National Research Council, 2012). In agreement Gemm Learning (2010) found that the ability to read with comprehension is achieved in the elementary school, which in turn requires automaticity in reading by second or third grade. Achievement of automaticity is expected in the second grade in developed countries – a situation that places the researcher in wonder as to whether automaticity is achieved at the same

grade level in Vutika Cluster Schools in the rural developing Zimbabwe. Focus is now shifted to literature review on the grade at which automaticity is expected to be achieved in Africa.

Kewaza and Welch (2013) found that automaticity is achieved in the second through third grade. Elizabeth (2015) in her study in South Africa on his study on sociology of language concurs that automaticity in English reading is achieved in the second and through third grade. Despite concurrence of research findings on the grade at which automaticity is reached contradictory evidence came from White, Kim, Kingston and Foster (2014) on their study on the relationship between poverty and reading success found high prevalence of non-readers in middle grades consequently prompting the researcher to investigate what challenges are faced in the second grade. Since this research was conducted in Zimbabwe the researcher felt the review would be incomplete if it did not cover the obtaining situation in Zimbabwe, which receives attention in the next paragraph.

The grade two primary English syllabus (1982) avers that automaticity in English reading is achieved in the second grade. Zano *et al* (2015) in their Jojo West Cluster study concurs that automaticity is achieved in the second grade. This study seeks to establish if this is so in Vutika Cluster. Having reviewed the challenges established in different parts of the world it becomes pertinent to review the relationship between automaticity and school performance that related research established regarding achievement of automaticity in English reading.

2.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUTOMATICITY AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Young-Suk (2012) in their study of the relations between text reading fluency and comprehension presents results showing that automatic word reading was strongly related comprehension and school achievement. Michael (2012) in his investigation of the influence of the theory of automaticity and the impact of repeated reading on fluency and comprehension skills of eighth grade students Widener found a positive correlation between oral language fluency and reading comprehension. Both studies focused on middle grades and concur that automatic reading is positively correlated to comprehension. The researcher wishes to find out if the scenario is the same in the second grade. In achieving automaticity the learner's mind is freed to concentrate on content and comprehension of the text (Pamela and Sandra, 2002; Gemm learning, 2010). The development of automaticity in reading reduces the load of the working memory by 90% (O' Donnel; Reeve and Smith, 2012). Thus learners who achieve automaticity read to learn. ERIM (2015) posit that, in Zimbabwe learners achieve the level of reading to learn at second grade. While literature concurs that most learners achieve reading to learn at grade two there are indicators that many learners go beyond second grade before achieving automaticity, a situation that prompted the researcher to investigate challenges faced by grade two learners in Vutika Cluster.

Woolfolk (2013) holds that, if the skill on the primary task is automatized it will not be disrupted by concurrent processing on the secondary task because automatic processing does not take up attention resources, on the contrary, if the skill is not automatized it will be disrupted by concurrent processing of a second skill because two skills are then competing for limited attention resources. It is for this reason therefore

that the researcher seeks to establish the challenges that grade two learners face in a bid to achieve the so needed automaticity. Having articulated the relationship between automaticity and school performance in developed world it becomes necessary to review the relationship between automaticity and school performance in Asia and Africa.

Li-chun (2015) in his study of proficient readers' reading behavior in Taiwan found that reading fluency was positively correlated to reading comprehension and school achievement. Similar findings were obtained by Hee (2012) in his study on the role of oral fluency in second language reading in Hawaii, Honolulu. Kewaza and Welch (2013) in their study on the effect of big classes on reading in primary classes in Kampala, Uganda, established that reading is a pivotal discipline and early achievement of automaticity dictates later reading success. Both studies reviewed took a global approach – that is they did not focus on a particular grade as is the thrust of this which pays particular attention to the second grade learners and teachers. Automaticity and school performance in Zimbabwe is the focus of the next paragraph.

A research on reading for fluency: More than automaticity by Timothy *et al* (2009) revealed a moderately strong correlation between fluency and silent reading. Similar findings were made by Zano *et al* (2015) in their research on challenges faced by rural primary school teachers in teaching reading to infant classes in Nkayi District. While research has been conducted in these parts of Zimbabwe no research of this nature has been conducted in Vutika Cluster. According to Early Reading Initiative Module (ERIM) (2015) the ability to read at foundational level (grades 1-2) facilitates meaningful learning throughout school. Automaticity in reading appears to facilitate learning in and

outside the classroom. Igwe (2011) asserts that the development of a nation is usually directly proportional to its literacy level. ERIM (2015) found that in Zimbabwe non-readers and struggling readers are found in the junior primary and in secondary schools. Given such a scenario the researcher felt intrigued to investigate the challenges faced by learners in striving to achieve automaticity at the foundation (grade two). Given the critical role of English in the effective learning of all other subjects in the curriculum in Zimbabwe, poor reading skills by learners will definitely negatively affect their overall performance in most subjects in assessment tests (ERIM, 2015). Early learning gaps that negatively affect grade seven and O' level in Zimbabwe are attributed to incompetency in reading by learners that would have been inherited from early grades (The Learning Tracking Study 2010). The next paragraphs review strategies for achieving automaticity as suggested by research findings across the globe.

2.6 STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING AUTOMATICITY IN SCHOOLS

2.6.1 Repeated practice as a strategy in achievement of automaticity

Seyit (2013) in her study on reading improvement in Turkey revealed that repeated reading enhanced achievement of automaticity and fluency. From her research Seyit averred that providing information and feedback effectively enhanced achievement of automaticity. Deslea (2014) found that presentation of oral reading early significantly contributed to the achievement of automaticity. Despite the presence of a myriad of strategies to help learners achieve automaticity in English reading indications are that not many learners are achieving, hence the study to establish the challenges.

Hudson (2008) in his study of reading intervention strategies to build automaticity at multiple levels in Washington, revealed that reading ought to take place at three levels namely: letter level, word level and text level. For Hudson reading for automaticity should start with letters, through words and finally text. Hudson concurs with Seyit on the positive effects of timed repeated reading on achievement of automaticity. Hudson furthers on to highlight the following strategies: timed repeated practice is best for learners who are accurate but slow in reading, timed repeated practice is best done individually, at least five to ten minutes three times per week, that grade two learners read between 90-100 words per minute and that there ought to be plenty of relevant reading material. Strategies employed in Zimbabwe receive attention in the upcoming segment.

The teaching of reading was observed by multiple researchers to be diminishing over the years in Zimbabwe hence the need for intervention strategies to address this crisis at the early learning grades (ERIM, 2015:3). The Early reading Initiative (ERI) is a program launched in Zimbabwe to assist learners in infant grades overcome reading challenges. Zano *et al* (2015) found that practice helped learners achieve automaticity.

2.6.2 Early intervention as a strategy to help learners achieve automaticity

The National Research Council (2012) of the US found that providing children with readiness skills and support once they enter school is paramount. The above finding concurs with Vygotsky cited in Ormrod (2012) in his assertion that teachers have to teach readiness instead of waiting for it as Piaget puts it across. Deslea (2014) found

that the pervasive influence of a child's early reading experiences on future reading achievement must be understood if teachers are to maximize the opportunities for all learners to become independent readers. Research reviewed above on the early is best notion. This research seeks to be less global than the above cited research by focusing on Vutika Cluster only to find out if similar results are obtainable in rural settings of developing Zimbabwe. Research findings on early intervention as a reading strategy in Africa receive attention in the next paragraph.

Christa and Johnnice (2007) in their research on high student ratio in South Africa revealed that learners should be assisted to achieve automaticity in second and third grade. In a related study Beverley, Nalini and Amadi (2008) in their study on Anatomy: spotlight on Africa concur that early intervention is of great importance in helping learners achieve automaticity in English reading. The researcher was intrigued to find out if early intervention yielded similar results in rural parts of Zimbabwe. Early intervention strategies in Zimbabwe are focused on in the forthcoming paragraph.

The Early Reading Initiative (2010) in Zimbabwe found that early intervention in reading is paramount in the infant grades of which the second grade is no exception. Zano *et al* (2015) on their study on challenges faced by rural primary schools in infant classes in Jojo West Cluster Schools in Nkayi District found similar results. The reviewed literature concurs that early intervention is best in assisting learners achieve automaticity. The research seeks to establish if the early intervention program will yield similar results in primary schools of Vutika Cluster.

2.6.3 Influence of first language (L1) as a strategy on achievement of automaticity in second language (L2) in schools.

Robertson (2003) in his studies on language policy in Japan found that it is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a learner is his mother tongue. On a related study by Young-Suk (2012) on his study on relations among first language (Spanish) and second language (L2) on text reading fluency revealed that achievements in L1 aided the achievement of automaticity in L2. The above studies reviewed studied the influence of Japanese and Spanish as L1 on English, this study exclusively investigates the influence of Shona in achievement of automaticity in Vutika Cluster. A review of related literature on the strategy of using L1 in helping learners achieve automatic reading in Africa receives focus in the upcoming paragraph.

Elizabeth (2015) in her Journal of sociology of language found that achievement of automaticity in L1 (Zulu) had a positive influence on achievement of automaticity in L2 (English). Orly and Siegel (2012) on their study on developing reading comprehension in children learning English as a second language found that children can achieve automaticity in L2 just as good as they achieve it in L1. The researcher seeks to find out if the same influence between automaticity in L1 is related to automaticity achievement in L2 in Vutika Cluster. The next paragraph focuses on research findings in Zimbabwe.

The English Primary School syllabus in Zimbabwe (1982) argues that teaching reading using L1 enhances the development of automaticity and fluency in L2. In contrast Zano *et al* (2015) in their Jojo West Cluster study found that using vernacular in teaching

reading confuses children. The researcher seeks to establish the influence of L1 on development of automaticity in L2 in Vutika Cluster, a rural zone that is free from research fatigue.

2.7 SUMMARY

In the chapter three theoretical frameworks which guided the study were reviewed namely: Skinner's operant conditioning, Chomsky's nativist theory and Vygotsky's interactionist theory. The key implications drawn from Skinner's theory in relation to the study are that the reading environments need to be rich with relevant (stimuli) reading materials to help learners achieve automaticity in reading. Reinforcement and shaping are strategies suggested in helping learners. From Chomsky's nativist theory the implications drawn are that the environment both school and home need to be conducive for the development of automaticity since learners have a natural predisposition to develop automatic reading. The implications drawn from Vygotsky's interactionist theory in relation to this the study are that the creation of a reading culture, scaffolding learners, model reading, practice and the assistance from more knowledgeable others are paramount in helping learners traverse their zone of proximal development regarding achievement of automaticity in English reading. Related literature was reviewed under the following headings: the prevalence of non-readers in schools, challenges faced in striving to achieve automaticity, the relationship between automaticity and school performance and the strategies that may be employed to help learners achieve automaticity. Having articulated the theoretical frameworks that guided the study and reviewed related literature focus now is shifted to methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the approach employed in this research and the research design. The population for the study, the sample and sampling procedure are also given in detail. On each an explanation is given as well as the justification for the particular choices. Research instruments namely document analysis, the questionnaire and interview are explained, with justification given as to why they were chosen in this research. Data collection procedures and ethical considerations are detailed. Data management and data analysis plan are discussed. The chapter ends with a summary highlighting the main issues raised in the chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

In this research, mixed- method research approach was chosen. Creswell (2014) argues that mixed methods are procedures for collecting, analyzing and “mixing” quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study to understand a research problem. The basic assumption is that the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in combination to provide a better understanding of the research problem and question than either method by itself (Creswell, 2014:565). Quantitative methods provided the opportunity to gather data from a large number of people and generalize results whereas qualitative methods permit an in-depth exploration of a few individuals. In this research quantitative methods were used to gather data from documents and from teachers. Qualitative methods were used to gather data from teachers in charge (T.I.C).

Achievement of automaticity in English reading is tangible and observable. For this reason quantitative measures were used. However, in order to probe beneath the surface of the observable achievement of automaticity, the less observable aspects of the challenges, it was important to combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies for data collection. Numerical data from document analysis(reading records and mark schedules) and verbal data from teachers were collected in order to come up with reliable data.

The mixed methods approach was chosen for the following advantages as cited by Creswell(2014:567):Firstly, mixed methods allow triangulation to integrate multiple data basis to understand a research problem, secondly data from one source could enhance, elaborate and complement data from the other source, thirdly mixed methods provide rationale for the design considers priority(whether quantitative receives greater weight than qualitative methods or vice versa) and lastly considers sequence (concurrent or sequential approach).

Mixed methods have a disadvantage on how to analyze data from qualitative and quantitative approaches. Cohen *et al* (2011) argue that in order to minimize this disadvantage the researcher needs to reflect on each type of design and consider the options for analysis within each design. In this research qualitative data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques and quantitative data were analyzed using quantitative methods of data analysis. The results from each method were correlated. Thus the two methods of data analysis were used to complement each other rather than in competition.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research methodology informs the research design to be used. The descriptive survey research design was used in this study. A research design is a plan of procedures to be taken in data collection and data analysis in order to evaluate a given research problem (Duploy, 2007). It is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation developed to obtain answers to one or more questions (Somekh and Lewin, 2005; Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003).

A descriptive survey research design was chosen. Behr (2008) contends that the most important goal of descriptive surveys is to identify present conditions and needs. In this light this research aimed to identify the conditions and needs of grade two learners regarding achievement of automaticity in English reading in Vutika Cluster. Behr (2008) goes on to say surveys must do more than merely uncover data, they must interpret, synthesize and integrate these data and point to implications and interrelationships. This research pointed out the implications and interrelationships that stemmed from challenges faced by grade two learners in striving to achieve automaticity. Oppenheim (1996) argues that a descriptive survey tells how many members of a population have a certain characteristic or how often certain events occur. This research thus quantitatively established how many grade two learners faced challenges with the achievement of automaticity in English reading. The major purpose of a survey is to describe the characteristics of a population, to find out how the members of a population distribute themselves on one or more variables (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003). Thus the research showed how grade two learners distributed themselves on identified challenges that they faced in striving to achieve automaticity.

The design was chosen for its strengths, one of which was breadth and coverage (Johnson,2004). The research covered three primary schools in Vutika Cluster.The survey design was chosen in respect of the following advantages cited by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) which are:It gathers data on a one-shot basis and hence economical and efficient, it represents a wide target population, it generates numerical data, it provides descriptive, inferential and exploratory information, manipulates key factors and variables to derive frequencies. Descriptive surveys gather standardized information(for example using the same instrument and questions for all participants), ascertains correlations (for example in the study the correlation between achievement of automaticity and school achievement) andcaptures data from multiple sources(in this research from questionnaires, interviews and document analysis). A descriptive survey generates accurate instruments through pilot testing and revision and makes generalizations about and observes patterns of response in the target of focus (Cohen *et al*, 2007).

Behr (2008) points out that it is expected that problems which are not involved in the present investigation, be identified for possible further specialized research. This research focused on achievement of automaticity in English reading at grade two level but however identified related problems that may require further research.

Information was collected from a representative sample through documentanalysis, questionnaire and interview. Surveys typically produce a large amount of factual information which can be cross tabulated in many ways to produce a wealth of description(Leedy, 2007). This can give basis for further research. Descriptive research

includes the use of techniques such as comparison, contrasting, measurement, classification and evaluation (Behr, 2008).

The major weaknesses of survey that were considered in this study were: its failure to give an in-depth study of a topic (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2006) if a sample is not representative, results are not generalizable, then generalizing from such a survey findings can produce seriously biased statements (Johnson, 2004). To offset biases resulting from using unrepresentative sample, the researcher used a large sample that was representative enough. The researcher employed mixed methods to facilitate in-depth study of the topic through qualitative techniques. There are not many types of surveys that can use samples of individuals that can be collected together as a group (Fraekel and Wallen, 2003). The study evaded this challenge by undertaking the study during the course of the term when both teachers and students were gathered in the schools. The thrust of the next paragraph is on explanation and description of the population in relation to the study.

3.4 POPULATION

A population is a group of individuals that has one or more characteristics that are of interest, to the researcher (Best and Khan, 2003). Gall (2006) defines population as the group from which the researcher would generate results of the study. In this research the population comprised one hundred and ninety grade two learners (ninety girls and one hundred boys) and eight teachers including three teachers-in-charge. Population denotes all individuals who fulfill the description of the group the researcher wants to

study (Creswell, 2014). In the study on challenges faced by grade two learners in achieving automaticity one hundred and ninety students made up the population. Leedy (2007) argues that the population for the study must be carefully chosen, defined and must be specifically delineated in order to set precise parameters for ensuring discreteness of the population. Proportional representation in terms of gender was followed. The researcher chose grade two learners because it is in the second grade that automaticity is expected to be achieved. From the population the next paragraph dwells on the sample for the research study.

3.5 SAMPLE

A sample is a group of cases selected from all possible cases of interest in a particular research project. Creswell(2014) holds that a sample is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for generalizing about the whole population. It is a subset of the population which must have properties which makes it a representative of the population from which it was drawn. The characteristics of the sample resonated with those of the population from which it was drawn. In this research the sample was 25% of the learners' population. Thus forty-nine grade two learners (twenty-five boys and twenty-four girls) comprised the sample. Grinnell (2000) argues that if the selection of some units that will represent the entire set from which the units are drawn and is carried out in accordance with the requirements of sampling theory the data obtained from the sample should quite accurately pertain to the entire set. The sample was deemed representative of grade two population of one hundred and ninety-two learners.

Jude, Smith and Kidder (1991: 131) say, "It is generally more economical in time, effort and money to get the desired information from only some of the elements rather than from all." Also when time, costs and the accessibility prohibit the collection of data from every member of the population, it becomes necessary to select a representative sample of the population, one in which the same range of characteristics or attributes can be found in similar proportions (Vierra and Pollock, 2008).

To guard against bias probability sampling was used to select learners, however purposive sampling was used with grade two teachers and teachers-in-charge (T.I.C). In probability sampling each member has an equal chance of being selected (Somekh and Lewin, 2005). The findings obtained from a representative sample are generalizable. Systematic random sampling was used. In the forthcoming segment a description of sampling procedure is given.

3.6 SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Systematic random sampling involves selecting the sample at regular intervals from the sampling frame (Creswell, 2014). A sampling frame is a list of all the potential participants in the population from which a sample is drawn (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1993). Subsequent participants were selected systematically using the sampling fraction. The formula for calculating the fraction was got by dividing the actual sample size by the total population. Thus $49/190=1/4$. The sampling fraction is $\frac{1}{4}$. Four is the sampling interval. It means that one in every four consecutive subjects was chosen for the sample. The initial number was chosen as four and thereafter multiples of four up to

forty-eight (School A), upto eighty (School B) and sixty (School C). The result was a sample of forty-nine participants with twenty five boys and twenty-four girls. Systematic random sampling was used because it minimized sampling bias by according participants equal chances to be selected. Having specified the sampling procedure, next in focus is research instruments.

3.7 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The study utilized three research instruments which are: document analysis, questionnaire and interview. The use of three instruments was meant to allow for triangulation to take place. Martyn (2008) holds that triangulation involves checking of the validity of an interpretation based on single source of data by recourse to at least one further source of strategically different type. In this study data from document analysis were used to check conclusions reached on the basis of questionnaires and interviews. Each instrument was explained with justifications for its use in the research, its weaknesses as well as explanations on how the effects of the weaknesses were minimized on the research. Upcoming is a description of document analysis as one of the research instruments.

3.7.1 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Mogalakwe (2000) posits that documentary research involves the use of documents that contain information about the phenomenon we wish to study. In this study the documents of interest were reading records, progress records and mark schedules for end of term tests. Payne and Payne (2004) describe documentary research as the techniques used to categorize, investigate, interpret and identify weaknesses and

strengths of physical resources, most commonly written resources whether in private or public domain. A document may be defined briefly as a record of an event or process (Cohen *et al*, 2011). The documents cited above were used to investigate and categorize sampled second grade learners in terms of their achievement of automaticity in English reading. Interpretation of the learners' achievement of automaticity in English reading was made. In the forthcoming paragraph the focus shifts to the questionnaire as one of the instruments in this research.

3.7.2 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

One of the research instruments which were used in this study was a questionnaire for teachers. A questionnaire is a list of questions that several people are asked so that information can be collected about something (Grinnel, 2000)

The questionnaire was chosen as one of the research instruments in respect of the advantages advanced by Cohen *et al* (2011) who say, a questionnaire collects survey information. This advantage is in tandem with the descriptive survey design chosen for this particular research. It is structured. In light of this study sixteen structured questions were generated to answer the three research questions. A questionnaire can be administered without the presence of the researcher. The researcher kindly requested the respondents to complete the questionnaires while waiting to ensure that data actually came from the identified respondents. Questionnaires are comparatively easy to analyze (Grinnel, 2000). The respondents were required to tick appropriate responses

hence their precious time is saved. Questionnaires have a clear structure, sequence and focus (Cohen *et al*, 2011).

In this study a closed and structured questionnaire was used. Cohen *et al* (2011) posit that if a closed and structured questionnaire is used, the questionnaire would need to be piloted and refined so that the final version contains as full a range of possible responses as can be reasonably foreseen. The researcher gave the questionnaire to colleagues to scrutinize and point out ambiguities as well as checking whether all possible responses were included. The questionnaire was then pilot tested with grade two students of a selected primary school. The researcher took time to construct and pilot the questionnaire to pave way for expedient data analysis in light of the time the project was to be completed. Questionnaires have a weakness of presupposing the responses, denying respondents of diverse responses (Cohen *et al*, 2011). To minimize the negative effects of questionnaires the researcher pilot tested them to ensure diversity in terms of reasonably foreseeable responses.

The questionnaire comprised of sixteen questions, three of which were open while thirteen are closed covering the three research questions. In the next segment the interview receives attention as one of the research instruments.

3.7.3 INTERVIEW GUIDE

An interview is one of the research instruments that was used to gather data in this study. Kvale cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) contends that an interview is an

interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest to produce knowledge. Sax (2002) argues that the function of an interview guide is to help the researcher know what to ask about, in what sequence, how to pose questions and how to pose follow ups.

The interview was chosen for the following advantages as articulated by Cohen *et al* (2011) An interview guide specifies issues to be covered in advance and decides sequence of questions. Data collection is systematic for each respondent, logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed, and interviews remain fairly conversational and situational (Cohen *et al*, 2011). The interview offers the interviewer the opportunity of giving a full and detailed explanation of the purpose of the study to the respondent. If the respondent misunderstands a question, the interviewer can add a clarifying remark (Grinnel, 2000). In cases where respondents showed lack of interest the interviewer stimulated and encouraged. In this research the interview comprises eleven questions covering the three research questions.

Grinnel (2000) argues that complete flexibility of the interview particularly where information is sought from a number of persons, can result in bias. The researcher minimized the possible bias by deliberately imposing some degree of standardization or structure on the interview. Taking down full written notes during the interview is time consuming and can affect the relationship and free flow of conversation between interviewer and interviewee (Grinnel, 2000). To alleviate this challenge the researcher used a system of coding responses while the interview proceeds as well as using the audio tape. The next section details data collection procedures followed in this research.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The researcher sought an introduction letter from the Midlands State University which was taken to the national, provincial and district offices of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and finally primary schools in Vutika Cluster where data was collected.

The researcher sought and analyzed reading records of the sampled learners. The researcher used $\frac{1}{4}$ as the sampling fraction wherein every fourth learner was selected to constitute the research sample. Samples of reading scores were extracted and recorded for the sample and averages were computed to give a final score. The researcher requested the head of each school to authenticate the extracts by date stamping. On each sample tables were drawn showing learners who achieved automaticity, those who struggled and non-readers. The tabled information was used to draw graphs.

The questionnaires were delivered in person to grade two teachers through school heads after a prior request was made with the head by telephone. The researcher showed the heads of schools letters from head office, provincial office and district office granting the researcher permission to carry out research in schools. The researcher awaited the completion of the questionnaires and then collected them. The researcher thanked the respondents for participation and the heads for granting the permission.

The researcher sought permission from the school head to interview the T.I.C of each school. The researcher first introduced himself to the teachers-in-charge and succinctly explained the purpose of the interview, showing them that they were in possession of

vital information needed for the research. Issues of beneficence, confidentiality and freedom of participation and withdrawal were highlighted thereby creating a rapport with the respondent. The researcher then kindly requested the T.I.C to complete the consent form and also sought permission to audio tape the interview. The researcher established a rapport by putting the respondent at ease through gaining confidence, and conveying to him or her the impression that he or she is in possession of information or knowledge which is needed for the research and which no one else can give. The interviewer read one question at a time, listening and avoiding interjections except where clarification of a point is needed. The researcher recorded the responses using a short-hand coding system and audio taping. The interviewer then thanked the interviewee for participation. The researcher played the audio tape and made a written record during spare time. The results from the three instruments were compared and correlated (triangulation) to ensure validity and reliability.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To gain entry into the schools the researcher got a letter of introduction from Midlands State University and an approval letter from the head office, provincial office and district offices of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Permission was also sought from the heads of schools in question. Participation in the project was on the basis of informed consent and on voluntary basis with rights of withdrawal any time. The researcher designed an informed consent form which was signed by the participants. Cohen *et al* (2011) contend that when participants choose not to participate in the study, respect their choice and do not use any means either direct or indirect to force them to participate.

The researcher informed participants that data gathered would not be used in any way which would publicly identify the schools as well as teachers and learners. Participants were participating on grounds on anonymity and were assured of confidentiality. Having articulated the ethical considerations it is now imperative to explore data management techniques that were employed.

3.10 DATA MANAGEMENT

The research produced both quantitative data which were stored in the form of audio tapes, printed text, statistical figures, tables, graphs and percentiles. Data on questionnaires were filed and used in the drawing of tables, graphs and charts. The short-hand notes from the interview were used as a back-up source for the audio-recorded data which has an advantage of preserving the emotional and vocal character of the responses and was used to compile a comprehensive written report.

The reading records were used to extract the sample using a sampling fraction of $\frac{1}{4}$. The recorded scores of the sample were computed to give averages on which decisions on achievement of automaticity were made. The extracts of scores were authenticated by the school heads. Data were stored as both soft copies (in the computer and on the flash and disc) and as hard copies. From data management shift of focus moves on to data analysis.

3.11 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The researcher systematically analyzed data using both qualitative and quantitative techniques in order to establish challenges faced by second grade learners in achieving

automaticity in English reading. The research questions were rephrased into subheadings into which relevant data from instruments were presented in text, percentiles, tables, graphs and charts. Thus both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were employed. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in presenting and analyzing data. The findings from the three instruments were correlated.

3.12 SUMMARY

In this chapter research methodology, which is mixed methods was described and discussed and so was the descriptive research design. Research instruments (Questionnaire, document analysis and interview) were articulated in terms of explanations, justifications for their use in the study, their limitations as well as ways of minimizing the effects of the mentioned weaknesses in the research. Ethical considerations which include informed consent, confidentiality, privacy and beneficence were clarified. Data management and data analysis plan were articulated. The next chapter focuses on presenting an analysis of data and discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main thrust of this chapter is to present an analysis and discussion of the research data collected through three instruments which are questionnaire, document analysis and interview. The data collected were aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. What is the prevalence of non-readers at grade two level in Vutika Cluster
2. What challenges are faced by grade two learners in striving to achieve automaticity in English reading in Vutika Cluster?
3. What strategies may be employed in helping learners achieve automaticity?

4.2 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.3 Sub-research question 1: *What is the prevalence of non-readers at grade two level in Vutika cluster?*

This question sought to establish from grade two teachers, teachers-in-charge and document analysis the prevalence of non-readers at grade two level in Vutika Cluster. In response to the first question teachers gave the following responses:

Table 4.1 Showing teachers' responses to question 1

(N = 8)

School	Percentage of non-readers
A	30%
B	25%
C	20%

Comment: The percentage of non-readers in all schools is in the range 20 to 30%.

Interview with teachers-in-charge gave the following responses:

Table 4.2 Showing interview responses by teachers-in-charge

(N = 3)

Teacher-in-charge from school	Percentage of non-readers
A	15%
B	20%
C	20%

Comment: The percentage of non-readers is in the range 15 to 20%.

Reading records were analyzed where five reading tests were considered. An average reading score was calculated. Document analysis revealed the following percentages of non-readers:

Table 4.3: Showing percentage of non-readers as revealed from document analysis

School	N	Frequency	Percentage
A	13	7	54%
B	20	4	20%
C	16	5	31%

Comment: The percentage of non-readers is in the range 20 to 60%. Documents revealed a greater percentage of non-readers in schools A and C than the percentages obtained from questionnaires and interviews.

4.4 Sub-research question 2: What are the challenges faced by grade two learners in striving to achieve automaticity in English reading?

This question sought to establish from teachers through questionnaire and teachers'-in-charge through interview the challenges that grade two learners in Vutika Cluster face in their quest to achieve automaticity in English reading. In response to this question the following responses were obtained:

Table 4.4 Showing challenges mentioned by teachers

(N = 8)

Challenge identified	Frequency	Percentage
Alphabet reading	2	25%
Inadequate reading resources	2	25%
Inconsistency in pronunciation	2	25%
Consonant blending	1	12.5%
Homophones	2	25%
Curriculum is too full	1	12.5%
Poor word attack	3	37.5%
Teacher –pupil ratio	2	25%
Absenteeism	1	12.5%

Comment: Each of the mentioned challenges was mentioned by at least 12.5% of the respondents. The percentage of respondents nominating the challenges ranges from 10% to 40%.

Interview with teachers-in-charge yielded the following responses:

Table 4.5: Showing the challenges identified by teachers-in-charge

Challenge identified	Frequency	Percentage
Age of learners	1	33.3%
Late coming	1	33.3%
Word attack	1	33.3%
Reading speed	1	33.3%
Long distance from school	1	33.3%
Poor reading environments	3	100%
Lack of cooperation from parents	2	66.6%
Para-professionals	2	66.6%
Poor teaching methods	2	66.6%
Mixing uppercase and lowercase	1	33.3%

Comment: On each identified challenge the percentage of respondents ranges from 30% to 70%. The percentages reveal that the challenges mentioned are common. Some of the challenges mentioned by teachers-in-charge were also mentioned by teachers.

The percentage of non-readers and strugglers as reflected in the documents analyzed suggest the presence of challenges.

4.5 Sub-research question 3: *What strategies may be employed to help learners achieve automaticity in English reading?*

This question sought to establish possible strategies that may be employed in schools in helping learners achieve automaticity in English reading. In response to the above question teachers gave the following responses:

Table 4.6 Showing strategies suggested by teachers

Reading strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Model reading	5	62.5%
Reinforcement	4	50%
Reading in groups	6	75%
Early intervention	7	87.5%
Timed repeated practice	5	62.5%
Scaffolding (supporting the learners)	6	75%
Individual reading	5	62.5%

Comment: The percentage of respondents suggesting each strategy was above 50%.

To a greater extent teachers agree on the strategies that may be employed.

In response to the question above teachers-in charge suggested strategies as tabulated below:

Table 4.7 Showing strategies suggested by teachers-in-charge

Strategy mentioned	Frequency	Percentage
Reduction of teacher-pupil ratio	1	33.3%
All lessons should be reading lessons	1	33.3%
Increase reading time	3	66.6%
Regular practice	3	100%
Providing adequate reading materials	2	66.6%
Assigning reading homework	2	66.6%

Comment: The percentage of respondents suggesting each strategy is above 30%. Teachers-in-charge agree on the strategies to a greater extent.

4.6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The research findings were discussed under the three sub-research questions whose answers the research sought to answer. In each case findings were given and a comparison was made with both the literature reviewed and the researcher's eighteen years of teaching experience. New views, challenges and strategies are highlighted.

4.6.1 Sub-research question 1: *What is the prevalence of non-readers at grade two level in Vutika Cluster?*

This question sought to establish the prevalence of non-readers ta grade two level in Vutika Cluster. The answers to this question were sought through questionnaire for

teachers, interview guide for teachers-in-charge and document analysis. Results from the three instruments are shown in tables 4.1, table 4.2 and table 4.3.

Results from the questionnaire reflect a prevalence rate of non-readers of 20% - 30% while the interview reflected a range of 15% to 20%. Document analysis showed a prevalence of non-readers of 20% to 60%. These percentages show that non-readers really exist in Vutika Cluster. Similar findings were made by Wim *et al* (2006) who established a 20% prevalence of non-readers in Dutch elementary education. These findings are consistent with the findings of Ise *et al* (2011) in their study in six European Union (EU) countries on support systems for poor readers and found a high prevalence of poor reading in the current EU members. Kewaza and Welch (2013) found high prevalence of non-readers in big, crowded classes in primary schools of Kampala. In keeping with the above findings the Learning Tracking Study carried out in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe in 2010 revealed that 95% of the learners in the primary school operated below their current grade level in English.

Despite variations in the percentages and lack of specification of percentages of non-readers by some researches, it can be discerned that non-readers are prevalent in schools in significant numbers. The research findings seem to corroborate Chomsky's nativist view, which posit that learners are born with a predisposition to learn and develop a language (Ormrod, 2012). Non-readers are prevalent in developed countries and so are they in developing countries suggesting minimal contributions from the environment. If the environment played a significant role achievement of automaticity, the expectation would be a low prevalence of non-readers in the developed countries

which have better environments as compared to those of developed countries. These findings are in tandem with the researcher's experience where learners from well to do families were outperformed by their counterparts from low socio-economic status families in reading. In such cases it appears nature plays a greater part than nurture in the achievement of automaticity.

4.6.2 Sub-research question 2: What challenges are faced by grade two learners in striving to achieve automaticity in English reading in Vutika Cluster?

This question sought to establish the challenges that are faced by grade two learners in striving to achieve automaticity in English reading in Vutika Cluster. The answers to this question were sought through questionnaires for grade two teachers and an interview for teachers-in-charge.

Results from the questionnaire show eight challenges with a frequency range of 10% to 40%. Results from the interview reflect nine challenges with a frequency range of 30% to 70%. Both teachers and teachers-in-charge mentioned word attack and poor reading environments as common challenges in the achievement of automaticity in English reading. Consistent with these findings are the findings of the National Research Council of the United States in 1997 which found that learners from low income families and attend high-poverty schools are at high risk of reading failure. In keeping with the above findings Doctor Conaty (2014) on his study on reading excellence in Washington D.C revealed that low-income children experience reading failure at higher rates than

their more affluent peers. Similar findings were made by Tricia (2011) in Ghana, Kewaza and Welch (2013) in Uganda as well as Kanyongo, Certo and Launcelot (2006) in Zimbabwe.

The above findings seem to corroborate Skinner's operant conditioning and Vygotsky's interactionist theories which champion the role of the environment in the development of automaticity. Skinner cited in Santrock (2003) argues that reinforcement and shaping play significant roles in learning. Thus Skinner appears to suggest that if the home and school environments are conducive achievement of automaticity is possible to a greater extent. Consistent with the above is Vygotsky's theory which posits that learners need scaffolding from teachers, parents and more knowledgeable others as well as a vibrant reading culture in order to successfully traverse the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Woolfolk, 2013). The research findings highlight the greater role of nurture as opposed to nature.

The researcher has also noted rich reading environments tend to encourage and improve reading performance of learners particularly if they are diverse, at the appropriate age of the learners, colorful and interesting to the learners.

Large teacher-pupil ratio is one of the challenges identified by teachers in Vutika Cluster. The teacher-pupil ratio for grade two in Zimbabwe is 1:40 (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education). Wisberg and Castiglione (2009) in a study to establish the impact of a reduction of teacher-pupil ratio in grade one and two found that a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:20 at grade two improved reading and test results. Similar findings were

made by (Johnston,2006; Geraldine, 2001; Kewaza and Welch, 2013; Christa and Johnnice, 2007). The teacher-pupil ratio in Zimbabwe is double that of the United States which stands at 1:20. From the researcher's experience the situation in Zimbabwe is exacerbated by the fact that some classes in Vutika Cluster are greater than forty.

Apart from the above challenges this research has yielded the following new findings: the challenge of inconsistency in pronunciation of English words, the challenge of blending consonants, absenteeism of learners and the challenge imposed by the curriculum which is too full.

Teachers-in-charge cited the challenge of paraprofessionals whom they accuse of employing poor teaching methods and mixing of uppercase and lower case in their teaching. One of the teachers-in-charge has the following to say about paraprofessionals with regard to early reading experiences, "*There is a problem of paraprofessionals who fail to properly sequence reading and they mix uppercase and lowercase*". It appears paraprofessionals introduce certain aspects of reading experiences too early consequently resulting in poor reading foundation being laid.

Teachers-in-charge cited age of the learners as one of the impediments in the achievement of automaticity. One of the teachers-in-charge had the following to say about the age of the learners, "*Age of learners affect reading especially those who are seven years perform better than those who are six years old*". It appears learners begin school before the recommended age. This was found to be exacerbated by long distances that some learners walk to school resulting in late coming thereby missing some of the

valuable reading lessons. From the researcher's experiences such learners are denied their play time thereby negatively interrupting the learners' language development, the result may be frustration on the part of the learner.

One of the teachers-in-charge reported lack of cooperation by parents with respect to according learners time for the homework and the assistance that may be so required. One of the teachers-in-charge had to say the following about lack of cooperation by parents, *"When you give learners homework parents do not cooperate well. At home there is no time. If you give the homework, no homework is done"*. The researcher's experiences hold that some parents are illiterate and poor consequently resulting in ignorance to make the necessary provisions such as time for the homework, lighting system and even encouragement. These experiences are in tandem with doctor (Conaty 2014)'s findings that learners from low socio-economic background tend to perform worse than their more affluent peers.

4.6.3 What strategies may be employed in helping learners achieve automaticity in English reading?

This question sought to establish possible strategies that may be employed in helping grade two learners achieve automaticity in English reading. The answers to the question were sought through questionnaire for teachers and an interview for teachers-in-charge.

From the questionnaire 62.5% of the respondents indicated model reading is one strategy that can be used to help grade two learners achieve automaticity in English reading. This response is in tandem with Vygotsky's notion of using more

knowledgeable others to help learners traverse the zone of proximal development in reading. In this regard Snowman and McCown (2012) hold that scaffolding techniques that are likely to help learners traverse their ZPD include prompts, modeling, rewards and feedback. From the researcher's experiences modeling was particularly helpful especially on alphabet reading and on new phonics, consonant blending and new vocabulary.

Both teachers and teachers-in-charge mentioned regular practice with feedback as one of the strategies for helping grade two learners achieve automaticity in English reading. One of the teachers-in-charge had the following to say about the need for practice, *"Increase reading time. All lessons should be reading lessons."* Another teacher-in-charge suggested the need for late introduction of content subjects in the infant department to allow adequate time for English reading. This finding is consistent with Seyit's (2013) findings in her study on reading improvement in Turkey which revealed that repeated reading enhanced achievement of automaticity and fluency. Hudson (2008) made similar findings in his study of reading intervention strategies in Washington. Zano *et al*(2015) on their study on the challenges faced by rural primary school teachers in infant classes in Jojo West Cluster Schools in Nkayi District found that repeated practice helped learners achieve automaticity. Sixty-six percent of the teachers-in-charge argued that reading practice may be increased through assigning learners reading homework, a situation 33% of the teachers-in-charge contemplated to be lacking parental support. From the researcher's experiences practice effects with feedback in the form of graphs and constructive comments have been observed to

facilitate achievement of automaticity. The researcher upholds the notion that all lessons be reading lessons because each subject area has vocabulary that is peculiar to it, for this reason the researcher is against the notion of late introduction of content subjects in the infant department.

Eighty-seven percent of the grade two teachers averred that early intervention greatly facilitates achievement of automaticity. Deslea (2014) concurs with the above finding when he asserts that the pervasive influence of a child's early experiences on future reading achievement must be understood if teachers are to maximize the opportunities for all learners to become independent readers. The National Research Council of the US made similar findings in 2012. The Early Reading Initiative (2010) in Zimbabwe found that early intervention in reading is paramount in the infant grades. The above research findings are in tandem with Vygotsky's assertion that teachers have to teach readiness as opposed to Piaget who is of the notion that teachers have to wait for learners' readiness (Ormrod, 2012). From the researcher's experiences it is not only early experiences that count but the quality of those early experiences. If learners are rushed into reading letters and words before adequate practice in picture reading, the result may be frustration on the part of the learner. The challenge of relying on paraprofessionals alluded to above seem to negatively affect the quality of early experiences.

Thirty-three percent of the teachers-in-charge argued for a reduction in teacher-pupil ratio which in Zimbabwe stands at 1:40. Geraldine (2001) in his study on teacher-pupil ratio of 1:20 policy in New Zealand found that a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:20 enhanced

student reading programs, teacher effectiveness and teacher-student relationship. Wisberg and Castiglione (2009) studied the impact of the reduction of teacher-pupil ratio in grade one and two in New York. The study revealed that a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:20 at grade one and two improved reading and test results'. In agreement with the above findings Johnston (2006) in his research on the relationship between reduced teacher-pupil ratio and practice concluded that small classes of about fifteen students and regular class of about twenty-five students enhance students' learning and achievement than the experience of proportionally large classes. Kewaza and Welch (2008) found that high teacher-pupil ratio negatively affected the reading performance of learners and attitude of teachers. In Zimbabwe the teacher-pupil ratio at grade two is 1:40 (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education). In agreement with the above findings Zano *et al*(2015) found that high teacher-pupil ratio negatively affected the achievement of automaticity in the infant classes of Nkayi District in Matebeleland North Province of Zimbabwe.

From the researcher's experiences in Vutika Cluster large classes greater than 1:40 are a menace regarding the achievement of automaticity in English reading. Teachers find it difficult if not impossible to implement individualized reading programs. Thus the amount of support that learners get appears minimal. Even if teachers break the classes into groups the researcher has observed that more often than not the groups are poorly supervised.

Sixty-two percent of the teachers indicated that reinforcement plays a significant role in helping learners achieve automaticity in English reading. B.F Skinner cited in Santrock

(2003) reinforcement and shaping plays significant roles in reading. The researcher observed that rewards and punishments are quite helpful in helping young learners achieve automaticity. Thus teachers may praise and give learners encouraging comments as they strive to achieve automaticity.

Seventy-five percent of teachers averred that scaffolding is paramount in helping learners achieve automaticity in English reading. Both teachers and teachers-in-charge concurred that teachers, parents, peers, siblings and more knowledgeable others need to actively participate in assisting learners achieve automaticity in English reading which is a second language for learners in Vutika Cluster. In agreement with the above finding, Woolfolk (2013) says, "Vygotsky assumed that every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level and later on the individual level; first between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological). Grade two learners need teachers, parents and more knowledgeable others to traverse their zone of proximal development in reading. The above mentioned people help learners recognize words, facilitate practice which result in the learner being able to recognize words without assistance. Vygotsky argues that learning is a collaborative process (Woolfolk, 2013). The researcher noted that reading practice proceeds better when learners are made to work in mixed or even ability groups. In their groups the more knowledgeable peers help their counterparts. Where ability grouping is employed the teacher appears to have more time with learners who struggle reading as well as non-readers. The teacher may even assign learners who quickly achieve automaticity to help the strugglers. In a nutshell the researcher noted that support from teachers,

parents, peers and more knowledgeable others is paramount in the achievement of automaticity. Greater participation can be achieved if teachers assign properly graded and sequenced reading material. The support need to be gradually reduced as learners independent readers (Vygotsky in Santrock, 2003).

Sixty-six percent of the teachers-in-charge argued for the adequate provision of reading materials in and outside classroom settings. The National Research council of the US (1997) found that learners from low income families and attend high-poverty schools are at risk of reading failure. In a related study Kewaza and Welch (2013) studied challenges emanating from large classes in teaching reading in primary classes in Kampala (Uganda) found that poor provision of reading materials including manila and markers militated against the achievement of automaticity.

4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the prevalence of non-readers in Vutika Cluster. the indicators are that a significant population of the grade two learners are no-readers. The challenges faced by grade two learners were discussed. These challenges are high teacher-pupil ratio, reliance on paraprofessionals, poverty, inadequate reading materials, absenteeism, late coming, age of the learners and limited time. Strategies highlighted by teachers and teachers-in-charge were discussed. The strategies include modeling, reinforcement, early intervention, repeated practice, scaffolding, reducing teacher-pupil ratio at grade two level, increasing reading time, making all lessons reading lessons, providing adequate reading materials and assigning learners reading homework. In each case the findings were compared with the reviewed research

findings for similarities and differences. The researcher's experiences were also highlighted in respect of findings on each research sub-question.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to give a summary of chapters one to chapter five. The main issues raised in each chapter are highlighted. The chapter also focuses on the research findings and conclusions. The chapter then focuses on recommendations that emanated from this research

5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter one focused on the research problem and its context. The background which necessitated this research has been brought to light. The high prevalence of non-readers across the globe necessitated this research. The researcher was intrigued by the outcry from grade three to seven teachers on the alarming number of non-readers in Vutika Cluster. The high prevalence of non-readers suggested there were challenges to be discovered. The statement of the problem was articulated clarifying that more often than not research on the achievement of automaticity tends to be biased towards urban areas. The main research question was formulated focusing on the challenges associated with achievement of automaticity at grade two level. Subordinate to this main question three research questions were formulated, the first one focused on prevalence of non-readers, the second one focused on challenges faced by grade two learners and the last one focused on possible strategies that may be employed to help learners achieve automaticity in English reading. The purpose of the study was specified as to establish the challenges associated with achievement of automaticity with the view of finding corresponding strategies to circumvent the challenge. The significance of the

study was highlighted in respect of helping the researcher fulfill the requirements of Midlands State University for the certification of Master of Education in Educational Psychology Degree, to expose the researcher to the rigor in social sciences research, to help teachers review their teaching regarding achievement of automaticity and also to assist other researchers since it adds to the body of knowledge in the subject. The study focused on grade two learners Vutika Cluster in Mberengwa District, thus specifying the delimitations of the study. The limitations of the study were that the results cannot be generalized to other grades in the schools nor cluster neither are they generalizable to other clusters in the district and beyond. Key terms were defined and the chapter concludes with a summary.

Chapter two detailed theoretical framework that guided the study and reviewed literature related to the achievement of automaticity. The study was guided by Skinner's theory of operant conditioning which champions the use of conditioning, reinforcement and shaping in developing automaticity. The study was also guided by Chomsky's nativist theory which propounds that learners have an inborn predisposition to achieve automaticity in any language (LAD). The study was also guided by Vygotsky's interactionist theory which specifies that development of automaticity in learners is a collaborative process involving teachers, parents and more knowledgeable others who scaffold the learners traverse their zones of proximal development. Literature reviewed revealed a high prevalence of non-readers in both developed and developing countries. Reading challenges were also noted to be prevalent across the world. The challenges involve poverty, age of learners, reliance on paraprofessionals, word attack,

inconsistency in pronunciation and lack of cooperation by parents. A review of the possible strategies to circumvent the challenges was made. The strategies include early intervention, scaffolding, reinforcement, repeated practice, use of homework and modeling. The chapter ends with a summary.

Chapter three focused on mixed methods as the research approach and descriptive survey as the research design. The justification for the choice of each was articulated with weaknesses highlighted together with ways of minimizing their negative effects on the research. The population comprised of all grade two learners, teachers and teachers-in-charge in Vutika Cluster. A sample size of forty-nine learners was drawn from the population using systematic random sampling. Purposive sampling was employed with teachers and teachers-in-charge. Pilot testing of the research instruments was highlighted. Data collection procedure and data management were detailed. Ethical considerations including confidentiality voluntary participation, informed consent, the right to privacy and the principle of beneficence were brought to light and adhered to. Data presentation and analysis procedure was clarified. The chapter ends with a summary highlighting the main issues raised in the chapter.

Chapter four focused on data presentation, analysis and discussion of research findings. The presentation and discussion of findings was guided by three sub-research questions, the first question focused on the prevalence of non-readers in schools. In this regard the study established that the percentage of non-readers range from 15% to 60%. Question two focused on the challenges that are faced by grade two learners. The challenges were established as poverty, inadequate reading resources, large teacher-

pupil ratios, absenteeism, poorword attack, age of the learners and reliance on paraprofessionals and inconsistency of pronunciation. Question three focused on strategies that may be employed in helping learners achieve automaticity. The strategies were identified as modeling, reinforcement, repeated practice, assigning reading homework, scaffolding, making every lesson a reading lesson and reading groups. The findings listed above were discussed under these three sub-research questions. The chapter concludes with a summary pinpointing the main issues discussed in the chapter.

Chapter five presents a summary of chapters one to five. Research findings and conclusions are presented. Recommendations are made together with suggestions for further research.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

The study established that the prevalence of non-readers in schools ranged between 20% to 30%. Therefore it may be concluded that non-readers are present in schools. The presence of non-readers posed challenges to school performance. The significant presence of non-readers in schools implies that measures ought to be put in place to alleviate the identified challenges thereby allowing a greater percentage of learners achieve automaticity in English reading. Various strategies ought to be put in place in the best interest of the learners regarding achievement of automaticity.

The study established nineteen (19) challenges faced by learners. The percentage of respondents generating each response were in the range 12.5% to 40% for teachers and 30% to 70% for teachers-in-charge. The research found that there learners from low socio-economic background in the schools. Schools and classrooms do not have adequate reading materials neither do they have sound reading culture. Some parents do not cooperate to the expected levels regarding helping learners achieve automaticity. Some parents are ignorant of their expectations. Paraprofessionals appear to lack basic experience to provide the basic early reading experiences. Basing on the above findings it may be concluded learners face challenges in their quest to achieve automaticity in English reading. The presence of such a barrage of challenges imply that vibrant intervention strategies ought to employed to rescue learners who are at risk of failing to achieve automaticity. There appears to be widespread ignorance on how to tackle the identified challenges on the part of teachers because a significant number of learners fail to achieve automaticity despite the fact that teachers are aware of the challenges.

The study established twelve strategies that may be employed to assist learners achieve automaticity at grade two level. The percentage range of respondents suggested on each strategy was 50% to 90% for teachers and 30% to 70%. The above findings suggest that there are several strategies at the disposal of teachers to utilize basing on the learners' needs. Despite identification of the strategies a significant number of learners fail to achieve automaticity suggestive of challenges regarding implementation.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended that:

- Teachers need to invent ways of dealing with and handling the current large classes obtainable in schools for example through use of groups and more knowledgeable others to assist strugglers and non-readers.
- Teachers need to treat learners equally and expect positive of them regardless socio-economic status.
- Teachers need to recommend learners from low socio-economic background into programs such as Basic Education Assistance Module so as to minimize the effects of poverty on learners
- Teachers need to implement compensatory programs for learners who come from impoverished reading environments
- Teachers need assign reading homework regularly so as to involve parents and more knowledgeable others in the development of automaticity in English reading.
- Classrooms and schools need to develop a reading culture through development of libraries, keeping reading records and reading clubs.
- Paraprofessionals need basic training before practicing and continued in-service training to enhance early reading experiences at school and cluster level
- Teachers-in-charge need to recruit learners of appropriate age for each infant grade level to avoid straining learners.

- Teachers and teachers-in-charge ought to conscientise parents on the need to provide time and lighting system for the homework and where possible assist the learners
- Classroom environment need to be well lit with age appropriate reading material that is main text books, supplementary books, class library, teacher and learner generated reading material.
- Cluster workshops need to be mounted in order to explore various ways in which the challenges manifest themselves

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study focused on challenges faced by learners at grade two level in Vutika Cluster, since automaticity is expected to be achieved at grade two through grade three, the study could have yielded comparative data had the researcher included grade three. The research was conducted in a rural settings, it would have had greater influence if an urban cluster had been included.

One of the research instruments was document analysis in which the researcher relied on different tests set by different teachers. It is hoped that had the researcher used a similar test(s) for all the learners this could have provided for comparative results.

This research employed the mixed methods approach, for this reason it may be exciting to carry out the same research using a different approach, different research design and even different research instruments in the same environment or in a different settings.

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