The exposure of English Ordinary Level learners to reading by ESL teachers

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Abstract
This study investigates the exposure to reading of English Second Language (ESL) learners at Ordinary Level (OL) in Khomas region Senior Secondary Schools. The study focuses on how ESL teachers expose OL learners to reading in the classroom. The qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design was used for this study. Data were collected using non-participant classroom observation and semi-structured interviews with ESL teachers. The collected data were analysed by establishing themes and emerging categories. The study is informed by the principles of the multiliteracies pedagogy of the New London Group (NLG) (1999). The study established that ESL teachers were not exposing OL learners to reading sufficiently, because they were still entrapped in mono-modal teaching habits. The ESL teachers who participated in this study revealed that it was challenge to find appropriate reading materials to use in the classrooms. In addition, participants in this study also demonstrated the lack of broad conceptualisation of literacy that is aligned with the principles and components of the multiliteracies pedagogy. The premise of this paper is to suggest ways in which OL learners can be exposed effectively to reading in ESL classrooms. This study recommends that the principles of the multiliteracies pedagogy (overt instruction, situated practice, critical framing and transformed practices) ought to be introduced in ESL classrooms in Namibia. As a result, ESL

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teachers will be able to create learning experiences that enable learners to develop strategies to read in a new and unfamiliar manner.

Keywords: *reading, OL learners, ESL, multiliteracies pedagogy, readathon, reading culture*

Introduction

Namibia is a multilingual country, with more than ten spoken local languages (Shifidi, 2014). Like many other African countries, Namibia was never colonised by the British, yet English was accepted as the official language after independence (Frydman, 2011). In Namibia, English is used as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) although it is regarded as a second language (ESL). Since the majority of learners speak their mother tongue at home, learners experience difficulties in learning in and through English (Hautemo & Julius, 2016). Totemeyer, Kirchner and Alexander (2015) investigated the reading habits of Namibian learners, revealing that the majority of learners have not developed a reading habit, and as a result, their academic performance is significantly affected. The study reveals that some of the challenges leading to the poor reading culture among Namibian learners are poor socio-economic background, absence of functioning libraries, lack of parental involvement, and limited reading materials in homes and schools.

To instil reading interest among Namibian learners, the importance of reading needs to be emphasised at the primary school level. This is because learners in this phase need to develop and acquire positive attitudes and fundamental reading techniques required for school, as well as for lifelong learning thereafter (Naidoo, 2013). The latter can be achieved if learners are involved in meaningful reading activities and reading from various sources. Although the above appears to be the aim of the reading projects introduced in Namibian schools, such as *Lets read* by The Namibian newspaper and *Readathon programme*, there could still be doubt regarding whether or not Namibia is indeed ready for the promotion of a culture of reading because only a few secondary schools are actively engaging in these projects (Hambunda, 2014).

Literature Review

A major obstacle to the establishment of a reading culture in the African context is that African societies are predominantly orature oriented. Many African communities regard reading as an anti-social activity and that it is only meant for educational purposes (Awe, 2014).

Consequently, Namibia also has a challenge when it comes to reading in ESL. After independence, the Namibian educational curriculum has undergone numerous reforms to address the educational challenges facing the country, mainly the poor performance in ESL learning (Awe, 2014; Joubert, Ebersöhn, Du Plessis & Moen, 2014; Nandiemo, 2015). The reform of the curriculum yielded two syllabi, namely the Higher and International General Certificate of Secondary Examinations (H/IGCSE), which replaced the Cape Education Department Matriculation Examination (CEDME) that Namibia used before independence. English was compulsory in both HIGCSE and IGCSE syllabi. The HIGCSE syllabus included a literature component used in ESL learning while there was no literature component in the IGCSE syllabus (NIED, 2003a). As a result, prescribed reading materials were included in the HIGCSE but not in the IGCSE. Howarth (1995) claims that HIGCSE was founded on the idea that learning and assessment should be integrated and not divorced from one another, as it was the case in the Cape education system. Iipinge and Likando (2012) discovered that from the initial consultations with the Cambridge International General Examination (CIE), provision was made for the localisation of the H/IGCSE syllabi, as they would serve as the foundation for developing the Namibian Certificate for Secondary Education. The H/IGCSE was revised and in 2006 new ESL syllabi, known as the Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary and Higher-Level syllabi

(NSSCO/H), were introduced to address previous shortcomings. Literature did not form part of the learning content for learners in the Ordinary Level (OL) syllabus, while it was present in the Higher Level (HL) syllabus. There was a list of prescribed reading materials in HL but not in the OL syllabus (Ministry of education, 2018). The latest revision for senior secondary was done in 2016 and implemented in 2017 for Grade 8 and 2020 for Grade 11 respectively. NSSCO was revised and made into a two- year course namely Grade 10 and 11. In this revision, a lot of reading content was introduced than the previous NSSCO version (Ministry of Education, 2018, pp. 15-18). However, there is still no list of prescribed reading materials in the new NSSCO syllabi. The NSCCH syllabi was revised and replaced by the Senior Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS), which was implemented in 2021 for Grade 12 (Ministry of Education, n.d.). The onus now lies with the ESL teachers to ensure that the revised NSSCO syllabus is implemented effectively.

According to Simataa (2013), exposing HL learners to various texts allows learners to read widely as a result of the reading texts prescribed in the HL syllabus by the Ministry of Education. On the other hand, OL learners are not exposed to reading widely, because there are no reading materials prescribed for their ESL syllabus. Thus, the Namibian education system does not promote a reading culture for OL learners. Since reading is not emphasised in the syllabus, OL teachers fail to emphasise reading (Busari, 2014). With most components presently included in the revised NSSCO syllabus, it is hoped that the situation will improve for the better. This is because teachers will likely cover all the components including that of reading, since unlike in the previous syllabus, it is more detailed. It is important to note that some teachers might still ignore it since it is not an examination component per se.

Nkandi (2015) and Shapaka (2015) explain that studying English at an OL is not sufficient for the expected proficiency of English, because not all aspects of the English language are tested at OL. Most developing nations' second language curriculum emphasise IR (Intensive Reading), and often overlooking ER (Extensive Reading). Namibia, a developing country, is no exemption. A lack of relevant reading materials in OL classrooms is an indication that less ER and more of IR is taking place. Huffman (2014) explains that ER characteristics include learners self-selecting from a wide variety of interesting, well written reading materials on their level of ability. Furthermore, learners read extensively but individually, and are guided towards the objectives of extensive reading, which includes an emphasis on reading speed, and encouraging them to read for pleasure or for information rather than for acquiring new vocabulary and learning grammar. IR on the other hand is characterised by learners analysing texts with the hope of understanding the text. This way of teaching reading has been considered as a pedagogical practice in language lessons and not reading lessons (Davoudi, Zolfasharkhani, & Rezaei, 2016).

Another implication is that teachers seem to value HL more than they do OL. According to Nkandi (2015), many teachers are not committed to fully attend to their OL lessons as they do to HL lessons. Finding relevant reading materials is also a challenge due to a lack of other resources, such as computers and the internet. Teachers have revealed that, in most cases, materials found in their "poorly-equipped" libraries are also outdated (Shapaka, 2015). In addition, Busari (2014) explains that OL learners lack critical thinking skills because of their under-exposure to reading at school. As a result, they experience several problems when writing ESL examinations. Therefore, in most cases, OL learners are unable to understand basic instructions in the ESL question papers, experience difficulties in the interpretation of resources provided in the question papers, and have limited knowledge of subject matter (Hilongwa, 2011; Nkandi, 2015). Learners with these problems are likely to naturally perform poorly in their ESL examinations.

Theoretical framework
This study is based on the multiliteracies pedagogy developed by the New London Group (NLG) (1996). According to Yi and Angay-Crowder (2016), the multiliteracies pedagogy addresses how Information Communication Technology (ICT) affects education, and how learners can be prepared for such changes in a globalised world. Therefore, the pedagogy of multiliteracies challenges the old narrative perspective of reading as a mechanical exercise. In the past, around the 1960s, one would be considered literate if one could read and write (Leimbigler, 2014). In today's globalised world, literacy requires a broader understanding and ability to interact in a diverse and complex world through the use of a variety of electronic media.

Ganapathy and Seetharam (2016) advocate for the capacity of using multiliteracies to promote learners' autonomy in learning, their motivation to learn, and to facilitate their own various learning styles. In the ESL classroom, learners become highly collaborative and participative, show improved interest in reading, and appear to be positive-minded when exposed to multiliteracies principles. Moreover, Angay-Crowder, Choi and Yi (2013) argue that learners' motivation and attitude are often linked to the learning of ESL. The use of the multiliteracies approach is helpful in achieving such a positive attitude towards ESL reading skills. When learners are encouraged, permitted, and motivated to freely use tools such as electronic devices (which they constantly do) they are also likely to access, search, and find sites and programmes comprising helpful reading materials. Therefore, the current researchers opted to use multiliteracies for the present study. The foregoing can be helpful in creating interest in reading and improving ESL from such uses. Kaur (2015) explains that, "learners who lack interest in reading will be motivated to read with the use of multimodal texts, as they are more easily comprehended with the pictures and other supporting modes such as visuals and sounds" (p. 22). It is, therefore, vital for ESL teachers to integrate ICT and other appropriate materials in teaching ESL to make reading more enjoyable and beneficial to learners. For this reason, Kaur (2015) suggests that the multiliteracies pedagogy advocates the potential to motivate readers, as it helps learners develop their visual literacy, while at the same time make reading fun.

The use of the multiliteracies pedagogy in the Namibian context can bring remarkable benefits in terms of ESL learning as it can help lessen learners' anxiety and worries about learning ESL, and the process of meaning making is much easier with the help of audio-visuals. Sujee (2015) reasons that reading from online settings may enhance literacy development, because the more learners engage in communication in the target language, the more they will learn the correct sentence structures and expand their vocabularies. Learners tend to be busy on their cell phones, iPads, tablets, and laptops and this implies that instead of learners carrying story books (hard copies), they are now able to download and save the books and materials they need to read from their devices.

Angay-Crowder et al. (2013) pointed out that for the multiliteracies pedagogy to be put into practice, the classroom should reflect the following four pillars of multiliteracies, namely, situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice:

(a) Situated Practice
Situated practice involves providing meaningful experiences for learners to participate in their own learning by building on their lived experience. In situated practice the teacher links the learners' pre-knowledge and own experiences to new knowledge In terms of reading; teachers should encourage learners to start reading texts that they are familiar with, and then move on to reading unfamiliar and difficult texts in the ESL classroom. Teachers encourage, and when necessary, guide learners to use their devices to obtain and read unfamiliar texts online, so that the online audio-visuals accompanying such texts can support their comprehension.

(b) Overt Instruction

Overt instruction occurs when the teacher provides active intervention and scaffolding to help learners gain conscious understanding and control of their learning. It enables learners to create conscious understanding and control of learning. In addition, overt instruction requires learners to be active makers of concepts and theory. This process requires teachers to apply their professional knowledge and skills to build upon the learners' current level of interest in reading within the ESL classroom. This implies that teachers can use available resources to instil reading interest into the ESL OL learners. The latter can be done through ESL teachers' efforts to explain why learners need to understand and be confident in applying the skills that they are taught. Teachers need to support their learners in their journey of mastery of the language. This requires ESL teachers to be actively and creatively involved in their learner's discovery of new learning styles, effectively linking them to what they presently know.

(c) Critical Framing

Through critical framing, learners step back from what they have learned, critique their learning, and extend and apply their learning in a new context. Critical framing needs learners to investigate causes and impacts, create reasoning chains, and clarify patterns in texts. This implies that learners learn how to critique texts, because in the process of reading, they interrogate the motive and interest behind an action in a given text, breaking down its layers, and analysing the components of language use presents. When learners critique a reading text, they develop their metacognitive abilities to examine their own assumptions, as well as those that are embedded within the text itself. In the context of this study, it cannot be claimed that analytical reading is encouraged and enhanced among ELS OL learners. This is because it is a common occurrence that when these learners are presented with reading texts in their classrooms, it is usually intended for comprehension activities rather than for challenging their analytical and application skills for language mastery (Ministry of Education, 2010b). If reading was to be an examinable component, teachers would put more effort in ensuring that learners are encouraged to read and comprehend texts.

(d) Transformed Practice

This pillar includes the transfer, reformulation, and redesign of current texts by learners from one context to another. The main goal of the multiliteracies pedagogy is to apply the skills, knowledge and behaviour that they have learnt through the first three pillars to their lives outside the classroom, in the real-world context. Every time learners read a specific text, they are transformed in some way, as they use knowledge, skills, strategies and ideas used by the authors in new contexts. In addition, transformed practice enables learners not to become passive consumers of knowledge, but instead, to become producers of knowledge in ways that are relevant to them as individuals and their surrounding communities. This pillar thus allows ESL learners not only to be transformed through multiliteracies, but also to possibly transform or influence the community's economic, social, or political life. Through this pillar, ESL teachers and learners will become active and practical consumers of texts, who, upon engaging with specific texts, will visibly display growth, improvement, and positive change in the way they act, and even in the way they reason. ESL learners – and for the sake of this study, readers – should be shaped into applying the positive knowledge and skills they acquire in their classrooms, by their engagements with reading texts.

The four pillars entail that learning is situated and context-based, and that scaffolding provides for the connection between prior and new knowledge. Therefore, to instil a love of reading in ESL learners, one should not stick to a single literacy, but consider all available literacies to create holistic readers. Teachers should use the multiliteracies pedagogy, for example, by allowing

learners to download novels or other reading texts using their devices, as this has the likelihood of encouraging learners to continue reading outside the classroom.

The current situation of COVID-19 urgently calls for the implementation of the multiliteracies pedagogy in ESL classes. Now that the world is forced into the new paradigm of online teaching and learning, it becomes easier for ESL teachers to apply multiliteracies within their virtual classrooms. Schwartz (2020) explains that various language researchers have started developing reading resources purposefully for virtual classrooms. Such resources include YouTube videos demonstrating various reading activities and comprehension lessons that parents can do at home with their children at different grade levels. One could argue that COVID-19 might become a blessing in disguise, especially on the side of ESL teachers who had had negative attitude towards the use of technology in reading teaching, as they have been forced to use online teaching now. This is an opportunity for ESL teachers to increase their efficiency and productivity by adopting improved reading pedagogies mostly through online teaching and learning.

Having provided justification for the implementation of the principles of the multiliteracies approach and how it would benefit teachers, it is also vital to provide how this would equitably benefit learners. Jacobs (2013) argues that it is not enough merely to provide opportunities for learners to engage in ICT because the reality is that not all learners in rural schools have access to cell phones, and not all schools have access to computers and the internet. Even for learners who have access to cell phones, the availability of data will likely hinder them from using the internet and other social media. Given the benefits and challenges of implementing the multiliteracies approach in existing ESL classroom practices, it is important that ESL teachers and other education stakeholders have a platform to engage in constructive dialogue about how they can integrate multiliteracies into the existing curriculum.

Methodology
This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study as the research design. According to Yin (2014), a case study is used "to describe an intervention or a phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred" (p. 36). This was considered to be the right method for this study since it sought to understand how ESL teachers expose OL learners to reading, which is a real-life context. The sample for this study consisted of four secondary schools in Khomas region and four ESL teachers, one teacher from each of the participating school. Therefore, purposive sampling was the main technique used to select participants who took part in the study. The participants were selected based on their possession of key information. The ESL teachers who participated in this study were believed to provide the most information on the chosen topic because of their personal experiences and years of experience in the ESL teaching profession. The type of sampling employed to select schools was concept-based purposive sampling. Although several schools in Khomas region offer English at various levels, most schools offer English at OL. The schools selected were, therefore, those that offered ESL at OL (Grade 11 and 12) which made them information rich cases for this study. The strategies used for data collection in this study were non-participant classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Non-participant observation ensured that the researchers could experience how exactly teachers engaged with learners in reading activities, and also how teachers encourage learners to read. By using this method of data collection, the researchers were able to observe what was actually happening in the ESL classroom in terms of reading during an ESL lesson. The researchers observed whether and how learners interacted with reading texts and how meanings were constructed.

Semi-structured interviews conducted with Grade 11 ESL (OL) teachers at each participating school to explore their understanding of the how ESL teachers expose OL learners to reading in

ESL classes. Semi structured interviews enabled the researchers to ask appropriate questions, both open and closed-ended, which provided crucial information to how ESL teachers expose OL learners to reading in the classroom. The data were analysed using content analysis. Content analysis was used as a technique for identifying recurring themes from raw data and interpreting them to obtain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon without a predetermined theory (Maree, 2013). If nothing is known about the phenomenon under inquiry, a content analysis is suitable (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). Therefore, this was the preferred analysis method for this study because it aimed to delve into the information to comprehend, clarify and classify how ESL teachers expose OL learners to reading in ESL classrooms.

Findings
The analysis of the data collected through observation and semi-structured interviews yielded various research results. The findings of this study are presented under four themes: learners' reading experiences; access to reading materials; inadequate curriculum support; and inadequate infrastructure.

Leaners' Reading Experience
Several of the sampled ESL teachers have noticed a lack of interest in reading among OL learners. ESL teachers highlighted that reading in Namibia was not sufficiently advanced because the culture in Namibia, as is common in developing countries, did not actively promote reading. In addition, ESL teachers elucidated that there is a perception among OL learners that reading was meant for school tasks alone, especially to pass examinations and that reading for pleasure was not quite essential. This study's results concur with the study done by Aweh (2014) on the link between reading attitudes and reading understanding of secondary school learners in Nigeria. The study found that learners were not interested in reading, apart from reading to pass their examinations. It is necessary, therefore, for ESL teachers to explicate the benefits of reading to enhance appreciation and encourage learners to pick up a book on their own. Based on the findings of this study it may be understood that the context and not only the content of the reading material was important in understanding it. A triangular relationship should exist between the reader, the text, and the interaction between the two, which must benefit the reader.

It was noted from the observation that almost in all participating schools silent reading and reading aloud were the most common reading strategies used in ESL classrooms. Learners were reading silently, which entailed that learners read individually during ESL lessons, or in the libraries. Reading aloud was observed to be more common in classes where learners were given a chance to read aloud from shared reading material used on that specific day. ESL teachers acknowledged that they use silent reading in their ESL lessons because it improve learners' understanding and help them concentrate on what they are reading, rather than the pronunciation of individual words. Teacher participants urged ESL teachers to encourage learners to read silently, as this would help learners to develop the strategies needed for reading fast with better comprehension. Reading aloud, on the other hand, helps learners acquire language skills (Snyman, 2016). Most ESL teachers indicated that reading aloud developed word-sound awareness. It also helped learners to develop positive associations with books, and a passion for reading.

It was noted from the interviews that some teachers used reading solely for a comprehension exercise in their classrooms. One of the teachers (T3) described the use of reading in her classroom as follows:

> *"Reading comprehension means that learners should be able to read and then be able to go and look for the answers to questions in the given reading text. It is the ability to*

understand the meaning of each word in a text, which later leads you to be able to understand the meaning of the whole story" (T3).

In light of the above, learners may not be expected to comprehend a text if they are not exposed to varied use of English in different reading texts. ESL (OL) learners may not perform well in their reading comprehension exam if they are not used to reading comprehension activities similar to those found in the examinations. It is, therefore, the task of ESL teachers to train learners to read widely, and answer both lower and higher-order thinking questions in order for them to excel in their examinations. Despite this, some teachers felt that reading comprehension was not receiving enough attention, as reading was not prescribed in the OL syllabus. As a result, too much time was spent on teaching other aspects of language, such as parts of speech. More time needed to be spent on reading for learners to acquire the other skills through reading. Reading cannot simply be practiced once or twice in ESL lessons under the assumption that learners would continue reading by themselves. Reading should instead be encouraged continuously – whether at school or at home.

Access to Reading Materials
This analysis of data showed that most of the participating ESL teachers acknowledged that they took their reading exercises from various sources ranging from textbooks, newspapers, magazines, and the internet. It was observed that some teachers brought books or other reading materials that they used that day and again collected these after the lesson. Since there are no reading materials prescribed for OL and that there are not enough books in classes, it means that ESL teachers constantly go the extra mile to present good and interesting reading materials to their learners. The advocacy for Communicative Language Approach (CLA) in ESL teaching (Nyathi, 2001) may explain the ESL teachers' motivation in ensuring the incorporation of authentic materials in their classrooms.

Furthermore, some ESL teachers highlighted that a number of reading materials were inappropriate for the learners because of the language used, how reading materials were prepared, their content, and their cultural relevance to Namibian OL learners. The ESL teachers further indicated that some articles from newspapers or magazines lacked an appropriate academic level and intention. This is to say, the materials did not promote the development of language skills. Another criticism regarding these materials was outlined through interviews by ESL teachers that there was no uniformity in the selection of materials; teachers chose texts based on their own preferences. Ahmed (2017) suggested that English language teaching materials should be sensibly prepared to offer a coherent syllabus, adequate language control and motivating language use with supplementary materials. The latter may not be the case for OL since every teacher chose what suited him/her. The above findings indicate that it is important for the OL syllabus to include prescribed reading materials, specifically for OL learners.

In order to deliver quality lessons, despite the lack of proper reading materials, participating ESL teachers explained that they usually encourage their learners to download reading materials from the internet. Reading materials from the internet are found to boost learners' interest in reading since they enhance comprehension through pictures and other modes such as sound and video (Kaur, 2015; Yi & Crowder, 2016). However, the challenge is that not all libraries are equipped with technology and not all learners have access to devices like cell phones. This once again highlights the role and importance of multiliteracies in modern-day teaching. The principles of the multiliteracies approach advocate the undeniable role of not only the internet, but of all electronic devices and technological meaning-making opportunities.

In highlighting the lack of teaching and learning materials in ESL classrooms, Nkandi (2015) found that learners did not have personal ESL textbooks which they could make use of when they were outside the schools. Hence, two to three learners were required to share a single book. This study concurred with Nkandi's results above, as ESL teacher participants outlined the sharing of reading materials as another aspect that discourages reading. Sharing of the reading materials was noted during classroom observations. Almost all of the participating schools had limited availability of reading materials. In some of the ESL classrooms, just a few copies of reading materials (handouts) were supplied by teachers for learners to read for pleasure. Some classes were large; so, some learners did not receive handouts and were told to share with those who had received. As a result, learners get discouraged to read because not all had the opportunity to read from the handouts in class, nor were they allowed to borrow them to read at home.

Inadequate Curriculum
In this theme, the participants firstly mentioned the influence of the inadequate curriculum (teaching, learning and assessment) that emphasised reliance on reading for examination purposes only. The lack of assessment strategies pertaining to reading of different literature genres was also mentioned. The ESL teachers explained that they did not expect their learners to read more often, because reading was not prescribed in the OL syllabus. Due to the omission of prescribed ESL reading texts, teachers opted for reading texts from different sources of their own choice, which were not scaffolded in terms of appropriateness, density, length, or text type. This does to facilitate cognitive reading, which is a form of purposeful reading that deliberately increases comprehension and language skills. In their study on a holistic approach in teaching literature as a tool in nurturing learners, Simataa and Mlambo (2017) pointed out that the OL syllabus does not include literature component as part of learning content for the learners compared to HL syllabus. Similarly, one of the teacher participants alluded that reading at OL is not taken seriously because the literature component, which put more emphasis on reading and has been an examinable component, is not part of OL syllabus. The teacher participants further stated that OL learners lack reading passion compared to their HL counterparts because HL learners are being forced to read due to the literature component present in their HL syllabus:

> *"Since there is no literature component in OL, we do not expect our learners to read more often because there is nothing arousing their interests to read as reading is not even prescribed as an examinable component in the OL syllabus"* (T4).

ESL teachers explained that even if teachers wanted to pay more attention to reading, there was not enough time to do so, because teachers had to concentrate on other tasks, which were crucial in preparation for the examinations, such as the writing of longer pieces. Most ESL teachers indicated that it was a challenge to divide teaching time to components that were examined and those that were not. Therefore, since reading was not an examinable component in OL, a lower priority was placed on it. To justify the above, one of the participants had this to say:

> "*Teachers mainly focused on examinable components in their classes. Learners normally are interested to read on what is going to be asked in the examination. I think it is a policy, which needs to be established by the Ministry of Education, where reading component is also tested in OL like what is being done in HL. Due to the fact that reading is not an examinable component in OL, teachers tend to turn a blind eye on it too"* (T5).

Some ESL teachers felt that the ESL (OL) syllabus prescribed too many formal assessment tasks that needed to be completed within a short period of time. Therefore, they needed to rush to finish these as required by the Regional Office (RO). These tasks put pressure on the teachers, who are already battling to cope with reading for ESL learning and acquisition. Teachers indicated that

the RO sometimes pressured them to an extent that they lost interest in teaching. For example, the teacher participants indicated that they were expected to write out lesson plans based on the syllabus and keep these in a preparation file. A subject advisory from RO was then supposed to visit schools to check the teachers' files and learners' books. Apart from the preparation file, teachers were also expected to keep an up-to-date administration file, a subject file, and a question paper file. They felt that too much administrative work diverted their time from teaching to administration, with little or no time left to concentrate on teaching. They indicated indicated that whenever the English advisories visited, none of them asked anything on reading practices or strategies. This shows that the OL syllabus does not seem to promote a reading culture, especially as far as Ordinary Level learners are concerned.

Most of the participating teachers highlighted that it was the Ministry of Education's responsibility to develop the learners' passion for reading. They felt that this could only be achieved if reading was to be made part of the OL syllabus. One participant urged the curriculum designers to prioritise reading on OL:

> "*As a teacher, I can do my part, but if those who develop the curriculum do not place reading among the priority areas, then it becomes a challenge, because I will be talking my own language. And remember, learners socialise with others from different schools, so if it is only in our school that I emphasise reading, learners will start to think that I want to do my own things but if it is made part of the syllabus like in HL, then all the learners will practice*" (T6).

This is an indication that teachers were eager for reading to be included in OL syllabus to develop countrywide uniformity regarding reading in ESL classrooms.

Inadequate Infrastructure
This study found that poor infrastructure impacts on a good reading environment. At almost all participating schools, libraries were available, but were poorly equipped. They contained very old materials that did not interest the learners at all. Similar findings are reported in Lincoln's (2018) study on the role of school libraries in promoting a reading culture among secondary school students in Nigeria. The findings revealed that library materials are outdated and have no relevance Moreover, Fatmasari (2016) also found that Indonesia's libraries were poor with old and dusty collections with no one showing any interest in improving them. In the current study, it was observed that libraries were small, and that books were not orderly shelved. It also emerged that often books recorded in the catalogue could not be found on the shelves. In some libraries, the shelves were not properly packed, which resulted in an uninviting environment for reading as it discouraged those learners who genuinely wanted to read.

Furthermore, most of the libraries at participating schools contained old books and magazines that were not of interest to the learners. These materials often contained information on subjects foreign to the Namibian context. Apart from this, there were far too few books available for the number of learners. Due to the size of the libraries there was no space available where learners could sit to read quietly for enjoyment. On top of that, it was found that in some libraries the library teachers would not allow learners to borrow books, for fear that they would lose or mishandle the books. This might not the best way to inspire learners to read. To instil a love of reading in ESL learners, this study argues that school libraries should have available collections of up-to-date reading materials, both fiction and non-fiction, based on Namibian contexts, as well as multimedia sections for multiliteracies purposes.

The results clearly clear show that the schools' library infrastructures could not support the actual learner population. The inadequate infrastructure was also emphasised by the classroom facilities. It was observed that most of the classrooms were overcrowded, leaving no space available to create reading corners or classroom libraries, which are essential in teaching ESL. The overcrowded classroom was one of the reasons why some ESL teachers used group work as there were not enough books for each learner to have one.

Conclusion
This article explored the exposure to reading of ESL learners at OL in Khomas secondary schools was explored. The study found that there was poor exposure to reading at OL and the use of inappropriate materials in the selected schools. This finding corresponds with the poor curriculum in the current discourse on the teaching and learning of reading in ESL classrooms. The important finding in the understanding of reading at OL was that OL teachers and learners do not engage in frequent reading because the OL syllabus does not allocate time for reading. Therefore, there is a need for the Ministry of Education to create new patterns for re-inventing reading in the OL syllabus. This will allow time for ESL teachers to fully engage OL learners in reading. NIED should also prescribe authentic reading materials to OL syllabus. Learners may enjoy reading if they read something relatable or close.

The study suggests that for a reading culture to emerge and be visible in Khomas secondary schools, pleasurable reading should be more emphasised starting at the primary school phase, and instructional methods should be more interesting in all phases. Similarly, programmes promoting reading meant for the whole community could be reinforced, as reading should eventually be part of all aspects of life and be available to the whole population, not only to teachers and other educational stakeholders. Therefore, the study concludes that fostering a love of reading should start at home at an early age. A positive attitude towards reading from all stakeholders in the education environment (parents, teachers, and the government) is likely to ensure that learners grow up reading for fun and enjoyment, which in turn will lead to reading for knowledge acquisition and information to solve social problems that directly affect learners' livelihoods.

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