

## 5. LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS LEARNING READING, WRITING AND SPELLING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

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### **Abstract**

*The experiences and perceptions of senior secondary school learners towards reading, writing, and spelling across the curriculum are critical areas of educational research. This qualitative study explored the experiences and perceptions of senior secondary learners at a selected school within the Otjozondjupa region regarding the learning of reading, writing, and spelling across the curriculum. The study employed Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory as a theoretical framework to show the socio-cultural influences on language skills development in a diverse educational setting. The researchers randomly selected 10 learners who got questionnaires, 3 teachers who were part of the focus group discussions, and 3 lessons that were chosen for observations to gather rich insights into the learners' experiences. The findings disclose perspectives on the integration of language skills across various subjects, shedding light on the social, economic and cultural factors that shape learners' engagement with reading, writing, and spelling. The findings reveal different challenges among learners in mastering spelling, with a notable disparity in the perceived importance of this skill among teachers. Additionally, the study indicates difficulties faced by learners in constructing coherent written narratives, particularly in organising ideas chronologically, and highlights a struggle in reading comprehension. The irregularities in spelling are identified as a major impediment to effective writing. In response to these challenges, the study proposes remedial solutions that emphasise increased spelling, writing, and reading activities to enhance proficiency. Furthermore, the integration of multimedia resources is recommended to facilitate a dynamic and engaging learning environment. The study suggests the provision of additional resources across the curriculum alongside educators' incorporation of model reading, spelling, and writing strategies.*

**Key words:** across the curriculum, learner, teacher, skills, reading comprehension

### **Introduction**

In recent years, the curriculum literacy has received great attention. This concept is often termed 'content area literacy' and it recognises that literacy instruction should not confide to language classes but should pervade to all subject areas (Brozo et al., 2013). Hereafter the earlier conception that reading and writing instructions were suitable for English classes only was overthrown by evidence revealing that learners require literacy for various subject areas (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012; Hayati et al., 2021). Spelling and reading relate to the use of the same underlying language knowledge in phonological awareness, orthographic knowledge, vocabulary and semantic relationship knowledge, and morphological knowledge. Studies have demonstrated that incorporating explicit spelling, writing, and reading instruction across subject areas improves both content learning and literacy skills (Wasowicz et al., 2017).

The experiences and perceptions of senior secondary (grades 10-12) school learners towards reading, writing, and spelling across the curriculum is a critical area of educational research that seeks to understand the multifaceted nature of literacy acquisition and application within the secondary school setting (Sultan & Himat, 2021). According to Walberg (2010), secondary education serves as an essential stage in a learner's academic journey characterised by an increasing specialisation of knowledge and a transition towards greater independence in learning. During this period, learners are exposed to different subjects that present unique challenges and opportunities for the application of reading, writing and spelling skills. This emphasises the importance of mastering language skills because literacy becomes integral to academic success across different subjects. As learners navigate

the various disciplines within the curriculum, they must understand complex texts, communicate effectively through writing, and demonstrate proficiency in spelling across subject areas (Walberg, 2010). It is believed that if learners possess good writing and reading skills, they are likely to become better communicators and thinkers, which support their overall performance in their school career. Nghikembua (2014) notes that learners' weak performance in national examinations for English as a Second Language showed that some reasons for below-standard results were poor sentence construction, poor spelling and syllabification. Making spelling mistakes can change the meaning that a learner would like to give to text (Nghikembua, 2014). Nandu et al. (2017) adds that many learners perceive writing as a difficult task that they would do only for the sake of passing examinations. Although writing is perceived as an essential skill, many learners dislike it, which leads them to lack the skills of expression in writing. Munge (2016), highlights that individual experiences, such as early exposure to reading or personal struggles with language acquisition, can influence a learner's motivation and approach to mastering language skills. Therefore, this article aimed to explore different experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and challenges that learners encounter as they engage with reading, writing, and spelling across various subject areas. The rationale behind examining learners' experiences in this holistic context lies in the recognition that literacy is not a domain confined solely to language classes, but it is a cross-cutting skill that influences all areas of learning.

### **Problem statement**

Teaching reading, writing, and spelling in English as a Second Language and across the curriculum boosts critical thinking skills in the teaching and learning of all subjects in schools. Numerous measures have been taken by the government of the Republic of Namibia, with other stakeholders in helping teachers to assist the learners in reaching their full potential in acquiring these skills (Ola-Busari, 2016). It was determined that learners have difficulties in reading, writing and spelling in subjects that are taught in English as a medium of instruction across the curriculum (Nghikembua, 2014). While numerous studies have emphasised the significance of literacy skills, including reading, writing, and spelling, the specific experiences and perceptions of learners within the integrated context of various subjects across the curriculum remain relatively understudied (Ola-Busari, 2016; Nandu, 2017; Childs, 2020; Getie, 2020). The existing literature shows a notable research gap concerning the experiences, attitudes, and challenges that learners encounter in relation to reading, writing and spelling across diverse subject areas within the senior secondary school setting. By addressing this research gap, this study sought to provide an understanding of the experiences, perceptions and challenges of senior secondary school learners towards reading, writing, and spelling across the curriculum.

### **Research Objectives**

The research objectives for this study were:

1. To examine the challenges senior secondary (grades 10-12) school learners face regarding reading, writing and spelling as skills across the curriculum.
2. To determine the experiences and perceptions of learners who study English as a Second Language towards reading, writing and spelling in English across the curriculum.
3. To explore remedial solutions that will address the challenges of senior secondary school learners concerning reading, writing and spelling skills across the curriculum.

### **Challenges related to learning reading, writing and spelling skills across the curriculum**

A challenge in teaching students to read, write, and spell is their lack of interest in practicing the language skills (Iimene, 2018). Iipinge (2018), in a study that was undertaken in the Northern regions of the country among Oshiwambo-speaking learners notes that most learners do not like to read or write in English, affecting their potential to develop skills in these areas. Iimene (2018), notes that challenges related to learners' inability to acquire reading, writing and spelling are linked to inadequate

training of teachers and limited access to appropriate reading materials. Reading, writing and spelling challenges are related to the learner's social and economic background. Some learners come from homes where they cannot afford to buy extra reading resources (Iimene, 2018).

In addition, Nghikembua (2014) explains that learners' reading, writing and spelling across the curriculum can be attributed to learners' poor understanding of sentence structure in English and their inability to write correct spellings and syllabification. Learners tend to have challenges in English due to the interference they experience from their mother tongue, lack of knowledge or rules that govern English communication and a general tendency to overgeneralise. Ola-Busari (2016) traces the learning problems related to reading and writing to the swift changes that were made when Namibia, after independence, shifted from the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction to the use of English with no proper preparation of teachers, which meant that educators who could barely read or write in English were suddenly needed to teach in English. The abrupt change without proper preparations of teachers impacted the educational system negatively.

Another challenge that can affect learners' perception is the feelings and experiences with the teachers. Getie (2020) indicates that teachers can negatively or positively influence their learners depending on their knowledge of the subject matter, their attitude towards the learner, and their learning process. This refers to all the teachers, not only language, but also sciences, History, Mathematics, and other subjects taught in English (Getie, 2020). For example, reading comprehension when using a science book is slightly different from trying to read a historical document or a passage in solving Mathematics word problems (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). Ipinge (2018) also emphasises that a deficit in reading and writing skills not only impacts the learning of English but also harms other subjects. It has been noted that some subjects, such as Geography and History, that require competence in English are affected by poor language skills (Ipinge, 2018).

Furthermore, the classrooms in Namibia are crowded with too many learners in all subject areas. This tends to affect the quality and quantity of written work that teachers can give to learners (Ola-Busari, 2016). Some teachers may only give learners very limited work due to the challenges associated with marking. For this reason, the learners will not be able to develop the skills that they need to acquire language proficiency in English. The issue of challenges that learners face with reading, writing and spelling needs to be solved for the learners to improve on these skills (Iimene, 2018).

### **Perceptions of learners towards reading, writing and spelling skills in English**

Negative attitudes towards language skills may also develop due to the history associated with the language. This means that attitudes towards language skills, especially what they hear from others and what they experience themselves, may affect the ability of the learners to be proficient in that language (Hilliard, 2014). Learners can have positive perceptions towards a language but still fail to display competence in that language, for example, learners in Tanzania showed a positive attitude towards English, yet their performance in the subject was below the level of being satisfactory (Hilliard, 2014). This differs from Getie's (2020) work which finds that learners who have positive attitudes toward the target language were more successful than those who have negative attitudes. Learners who have problems in reading and writing develop a negative viewpoint towards reading and writing. Due to this negative attitude, learners avoid work that requires reading and or writing, thus they fall behind their peers academically (Hayati et al., 2021).

"Writing in the mother tongue is painful for many students, but when it comes to writing in the second language the students' hardship and pain are worse" (Ismail, 2011, p. 74). Ismail (2011), further indicates that even though students find writing challenging, they value feedback from their teachers, and they feel that feedback is indispensable. Learners tend to believe that giving feedback or receiving feedback can contribute more to improving learners' writing skills. Learners who have problems in reading and writing develop a negative attitude towards reading and writing because they cannot overcome these problems after a while. If the learners have a negative attitude, they avoid works

requiring reading and/or writing, affecting their academic performances (Akyol et al., 2021). There appears to be limited information from learners about their perceptions and experiences of reading, writing and spelling, thus this study is necessary to address this gap.

### **Theoretical framework**

The study used the Sociocultural Learning theory by Vygotsky. Marginson and Anh (2018) note that Vygotsky stressed the importance of experience in the learning process. Vygotsky maintains that people develop thought as a social activity as they seek to communicate with others. Getie (2020) supports that languages are primarily social mechanisms since languages are learned in social contexts. Language learning takes place in society and though social factors might not have direct influences; they might have traceable effects on perceptions of the learners. This theory's emphasis on the social nature of learning makes it appropriate to serve as a theoretical framework to explain how second language speakers acquire competencies in reading, writing and spelling in English. If reading can involve group discussions of the text read, writing can be collaborative and spelling activities can be designed to encourage interaction to foster a collaborative learning environment.

The Sociocultural Learning theory is also known for the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, which means that there are instances where a child can learn on their own and what they can do with the help of a more competent adult (Negueruela-Azarola & Garcia, 2016). This concept of Zone of Proximal Development theory describes the zone between the level at which a child can work unassisted and the level at which he or she can function with assistance. This implies that in the context of reading, writing, and spelling, learners may get the materials that can enhance independent, collaborative and guided learning. Learners can be provided with support and guidance to engage with more complex language tasks.

According to Negueruela-Azarola and Garcia (2016), Vygotsky argues that language is not just a means of communication but a tool for thinking. In the learning situation across the curriculum, communication occurs between the teachers and the learners in a way that changes how the learners think. Learners' experiences change or transform as they interact among themselves in English or with a teacher. Reading, writing, and spelling are not isolated skills but interconnected processes that enhance cognitive abilities. This theory is applicable to this study because Vygotsky supports the idea that language is integrated across subjects (Marginson & Anh, 2018). Marginson and Anh (2018) further indicate that this means the theory promotes communication skills in various disciplines. Reading, writing, and spelling should not be confined to language classes but should be integrated into science, Mathematics, and other subjects, reflecting the interconnected nature of knowledge (Iipinge, 2018). Vygotsky also emphasises that cultural tools, such as language, writing systems, and symbolic representations, shape cognitive development. Exposure to diverse texts, writing styles, and spelling patterns contributes to a child's cognitive growth in the context of reading, writing, and spelling. Reading and writing are about acquiring information and developing critical thinking skills that enhance learners' cognitive development (Defazio et al., 2010).

### **Methodology**

This study used a narrative qualitative case study. The study used random sampling to sample 3 teachers and 10 Grade 11 learners, assuming that everyone in the population stood an equal chance to be part of the study. The learners were chosen from 3 different Grade 11 classes at a selected school to give more of an overall perspective at the senior secondary level. Three instruments were used during the data collection of this study: focus group discussion, questionnaire, and classroom observation. Relevant questions were compiled into an interview script to help facilitate discussions, establish direction for discussions and pursue certain topics raised by respondents. The researchers took notes and recorded the focus group discussion process. The researchers observed three lessons for promotional subjects, including English as a subject, using an observation checklist as an instrument to determine the learners' willingness to participate in writing and reading classroom

activities. 10 questionnaires were given to learners from different promotional subjects taught in English. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions to gain an understanding of the experience and perceptions of learners towards learning reading, writing, and spelling skills across the curriculum. The recorded audio of the focus group discussions was repeatedly listened to, to capture what participants had said during the discussions and be able to write down their responses. After the transcriptions, the researchers selected common themes and subthemes emerging from all the instruments and presented them in order of the research objectives of the study. The ethical considerations were followed by writing a consent letter to the principal of the selected school for the researchers to conduct the research at the school. Informed consent was also sought from parents or caregivers of prospective learners. The nature of this study was explained to all participants before they participated in the study. Voluntary participation was granted to all participants. The name of the school was not revealed. It was referred to as a selected school within the wider Otjozondjupa region.

## Findings of the study

### Challenges faced by senior secondary school learners concerning reading, writing and spelling

The participants in the focus group were asked to describe the reading ability of learners at Grade 11 learners across the curriculum. Participant A described the reading ability of learners as *“fair, though there are some learners who struggle with reading comprehension”*. Participant B noted that *“most learners have challenges with reading English appropriately”*. Participant C said, *“most learners are struggling to read, they cannot properly pronounce words”*.

The participants were asked to randomly list the words that learners struggle to read at the Grade 11 level in subjects they teach and the following words in Table 1 were noted using a focus group discussion:

**Table 1: Words that learners struggle to read**

1. Integration
2. Derivatives
3. Consequence
4. Mischievous
5. Nauseous
6. Equivocal
7. Sequences

The focus group discussion participants were also asked to indicate the major challenges that learners face in reading across the curriculum. Table 2 shows the reasons that were discussed:

**Table 2: Challenges that learners face in reading across the curriculum**

1. Lack of reading materials
2. Lack of knowledge of rules regarding pronunciation
3. Low levels of motivation among learners to learn English
4. Bullying by other learners when they try to communicate in English
5. Lack of reading comprehension

The focus group was asked to randomly list words that learners struggle to spell in subjects they teach and the following list in Table 3 was presented:

**Table 3: Words that learners struggle to spell**

1. Anthropometric data	6. Meanders
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2. Incineration	7. Conventional
3. Aesthetic	8. Conservation
4. Cumulonimbus	9. Stratus
5. Accept	10. Certify

The participants were asked to indicate reasons that make learners struggle with English at school and Participant A asserted that: *“English is their second language, and this leads to challenges for them to learn to correct spellings”*. Participants B and C added that learners lacked motivation to read on their own and the foundation for learning English was not properly laid in primary school or at home.

Learners were also asked to indicate if they got reading and writing support at home. Most of the learners who completed the questionnaire indicated that their parents could not read or write in English, so they hardly get support from their parents. Few of the learners said that the culture at home did not expose them to the English language and did not have the support needed to read English. The participants were asked to indicate if their teachers used English at school and the results were mixed. Few learners stated that their teachers used English to communicate at school, mostly inside the classrooms, while most said the teachers hardly used English on the school grounds. Most of the learners agreed that they could access reading materials, but there seemed to be no interest in reading.

The lesson observations found that some learners struggled to pronounce technical terms when reading in different subject areas. They tended to pronounce the technical terms in a way that showed influence from their mother tongue. The lesson observation also showed that the way learners pronounce the terms tends to influence the way they spell them. It also seemed that the mispronunciation was linked to the fact that learners were not used to reading widely, and they tried to use terms that they heard in class from the teachers. It was also noted that learners’ reading comprehension was limited as they tended to fail to interpret what they had read in their own words. The learners mostly quoted what was stated in the text without showing an understanding of what they had read. However, the lessons showed a high level of teacher-learner interaction and learner-teacher interaction.

### Perceptions of learners towards reading, writing and spelling in English

The focus group discussion participants were asked to state the perceptions that learners had concerning when they were learning in their mother tongue and Participant A asserted that *“learners feel that they would understand better if they were taught in their mother tongue”*. Participant B indicated that *“the perceptions of learners towards learning in English are mixed. Some learners would want to learn in English and others would want to learn in their mother tongue”*. Participant B explained that the learners’ participation in class, including writing, spelling and grammar, was affected by their background concerning their mother tongue. Participant C added that *“learners struggle to spell at times due to the challenge they have in pronouncing some words and also because they think in their mother tongue”*. Participant B added that *“many learners do not read widely so their vocabulary knowledge is very restricted, and this restricts their expressions when they are writing longer pieces. Ideas would flow in chronological order when they are written in their mother tongue rather than in English”*.

The participants in the focus group discussion were asked to state their perceptions towards the use of English as a medium of instruction. Participant B said, *“English is an official language of instruction, and it is used globally, so our learners have to engage in it”*. Participant A noted that speaking in English *“feels very good and you can understand things easily”*. This means that English is seen as possessing a status symbol. Participant C noted that *“it is a complicated language when it comes to pronunciation and spelling”*.

Learners were asked to indicate how they found writing long texts. All learners found writing long text in English challenging due to its grammar complexity regarding concepts like verb tenses, articles, and sentence structures requiring time and practice. The organisation of long texts requires strong organisational skills to maintain coherence and flow throughout the entire piece. Learners indicated that they struggled with structuring their ideas, creating effective transitions between paragraphs, and ensuring a logical progression of thought. A few of the learners further expanded that writing was made difficult by irregularities in English spelling in all the subjects taught in English. English has many irregularities where a word's pronunciation doesn't match its spelling. *"This makes it difficult for us to predict how a word is spelt based on its pronunciation"* one of the learners stated.

The learners were asked to state if they were taught spelling in all the subjects they learned. All learners indicated that not every teacher saw spelling as a skill that was important in every subject.

In addition, learners were asked if they had read newspapers, magazines, novels, and other long texts related to subjects across the curriculum. Half of the participants agreed that they often read materials related to different subjects across the curriculum. They got some texts from their English teachers during the lessons and got novels, magazines, and newspapers from the school library. Half of the learners indicated that they read in class but never enjoyed reading at all because they failed to understand some technical words in some subject areas. They said that some texts were difficult to understand and did not find reading materials that aligned with their interests.

The learners were asked to explain if they received support to learn English at home. Few of the learners answered that they got support at home to learn how to read and write properly. Most of the learners noted that if their parents were able to read and write in English, they could provide support to them in the area of reading and writing. Other learners indicated that their parents could read write and read in English but they did not render them assistance to improve their reading skills.

The lesson observations showed that most of the learners were keen to learn English because of the participation they made during lessons in the target language. The lesson observations showed that most of the learners were enthusiastic when it came to speaking in English, however, they complained when the teacher had to give them any writing activities. Most of them knew many words that they could say but struggled to pronounce or spell them. Some learners made fun of those who pronounced the words wrongly. The lesson observations also showed that all teachers observed could teach in English as a medium of instruction, however, not all of the teachers would correct learners' spelling errors as English teachers would.

### **Remedial solutions that can help learners to improve reading, writing and spelling skills**

In the focus group discussion, participants were asked to explain ways in which learners' ability to write and read in English may be improved. Participant A explained that they used spelling competitions to help learners to spell correctly in English. The same participant asserted that giving learners more writing and reading work could help them practice writing and reading in English. Participant B suggested that learners needed to be taught how to read daily in all subject areas, not only English lessons. Participant C explained that teachers must use learner-centred learning activities that could encourage learners to work in pairs or groups on reading activities. Participant C further explained that teachers must model the use of English in school so that learners can gain confidence in writing and reading in English. Participant B stated that teachers should use multimedia resources to teach across the curriculum to help learners learn to read and write. Participant A advised that spelling correction should not just be the responsibility of English teachers, all teachers across the curriculum should correct the spelling errors of the learners.

The learners were asked to explain how teachers could help them learn to read, write and spell in English. Most of the learners responded that teachers should give more spelling tests, teachers must model reading, and learners should be given more reading books such as novels, and other texts

related to other subject areas e.g. biology rather than textbooks prescribed for their grades and some ideas should be explained in their mother tongue. A few learners wanted the teachers to give them a lot of written exercises and teachers should postulate a positive attitude toward the mistakes of the learners as part of the learning process of writing.

### Discussions

The study has found that learners have challenges with reading and writing in English. Many of the words they write are not either clear or they get mixed up from spelling errors that one cannot decipher what they want to say. Some learners can read all the words in the reading passage but cannot interpret what they have read. "Most learners struggle to understand what they are reading and have trouble expressing what they understand in writing" (Ithindi, 2019, p. 58).

The findings also state that some teachers are reluctant to speak English outside the classroom to motivate the learners to do the same and learners do not get enough reading materials to read further. This contradicts Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory that emphasises the importance of learning through participation in authentic meaningful experiences through interactions with others, rather than through an individualised process of learning. Ipinge (2018) notes in her study in the northern region of Namibia among Oshiwambo-speaking people that the majority of teachers and learners in such schools speak mostly Oshiwambo making it difficult for them to engage in English either in class or during school breaks which impacts the learners' interactions negatively.

Learners have complained of not getting enough materials from different subject areas. Reading materials from various subjects help learners develop diverse reading comprehension skills and expose learners to a broader range of topics, ideas, and information. Reading is considered to be a social process because it involves the reader and the writer for one to comprehend the text very well. Vygotsky (1978) agrees that reading is a social process that occurs through an internal dialogue between the text and the reader through which the reader makes meaning of what is being read. Reading extensively is important in developing learners' attitudes and fostering their self-perceptions that contribute to success as reading is often integral to all subjects.

Furthermore, the findings also found that learners find the organisation of long texts, coherence and flow throughout the entire piece to be a problem. Learners struggle with structuring their ideas, creating effective transitions between paragraphs, and ensuring a logical progression of thoughts. According to Childs (2020), writing is a skill that is necessary and relevant in many settings. Learners benefit from writing tasks in every subject area. This should be done with creative, culturally relevant, and engaging curriculum and instruction and open-ended prompts that allow learners to fully develop responses. Teachers need to assist learners in getting quality writing experiences in other subjects rather than English by assigning authentic tasks and teaching engaging lessons. Authentic writing allows learners to utilise their writing skills across subjects and topics, and it allows learners to become more comfortable with the processes that writing involves (Childs, 2020). This can be done when learners negotiate with others and use writing as a tool for learning and use their voices in school and throughout their community to communicate (Broom, 2015). This resonates with Vygotsky's ideas in Getie (2020) that language learning takes place in society and though social factors might not have direct influences; they might have traceable effects on the perceptions of the learners.

Most of the learners indicated that they would want all subject teachers to emphasise spelling as it seems to be one of the skills that can inhibit academic success. Althobaiti (2020) signifies that spelling ability enhances learners' reading proficiency; the ability of learners to pronounce words correctly and develop effective spelling skills will also contribute to learners' development of reading fluency and writing skills. A deficit in writing skills not only impacts the learning of English but has a negative effect on other subjects. It has been noted that some subjects such as Geography and History that require competence in English are affected by poor language skills (Ipinge, 2018). Reed (2012) indicates that some curriculum guidelines reiterate that all aspects of literacy teaching should not be confined to



English lessons alone but must be applied in all other learning areas. This may only be achieved if all teachers, including subject specialists in secondary schools, ensure that their learners cannot only read and understand new vocabulary and terminology in their subjects but can also spell those words.

Some learners want the content of the materials taught to be translated into their mother tongue. Some scholars like Ola-Busari (2016) note that translating content into the mother tongue can have a negative effect on literacy. Some of the reasons for the poor literacy skills were noted as a practice by learners to translate words in their mother tongue into English. The same author indicates that learners have another challenge in learning to read in Namibia; a lack of a reading culture. The learners struggle with weaknesses in reading and writing skills, which is so severe that some of them fail to secure a place at tertiary institutions.

### Conclusions

This research aimed to explore the experiences and perceptions of senior secondary learners regarding the learning of reading, writing, and spelling skills across various subjects in the curriculum. The findings provide valuable insights into these learners' challenges, perceptions, and attitudes as they navigate literacy-related tasks in their academic journey and remedial solutions that will address the challenges faced by senior secondary school learners. The following conclusions are drawn based on these research questions and the data collected. The reading, writing and spelling challenges are related to the efforts and socio-economic background of learners and their parents. Learners seem to lack the motivation to read widely, and, in some instances, teachers need to model reading in English to help build their confidence. The use of learner-centred learning can help learners collaborate on tasks such as reading, writing longer pieces, and other tasks in English. The study has underscored the relationship of reading, writing, and spelling across diverse subjects, emphasising the need for a holistic approach to language education in the senior secondary phase. Recognising learners' unique challenges and preferences in this context is essential for educators and curriculum designers to tailor instructional strategies that foster a supportive and effective learning environment.

### Recommendations

It is important to provide more reading resources across the curriculum in English to encourage learners to read widely. This can be done by ensuring that learners have numerous reading materials covering a wide array of subjects to help learners from poor socio-economic backgrounds have access to reading materials. Encourage educators to use learner-centred activities such as spelling competitions and peer reading to enhance collaboration among learners. Teachers should be to consistently model effective language skills in English within the school setting. When teachers model reading, writing, and spelling in English within the school, it can also encourage learners to use the English language correctly. It is the teaching of English in a cultural and social context that helps learners develop knowledge of concepts.

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