# AN EXPLORATION OF THE POTENTIAL OF WORDLESS PICTUREBOOKS TO ENCOURAGE PARENT-CHILD READING IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

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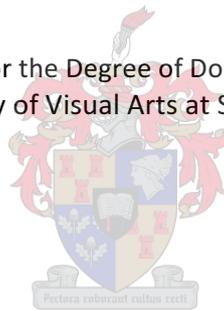
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ABSTRACT

This research study focused on the influence of a participatory project in which wordless picturebooks were used in parent-child joint reading and, more generally, the development of a culture of reading in the home. The research was conducted within the South African context, in low socio-economic areas of Gauteng, and is approached from the researcher's viewpoint as an illustrator. Using multimodal social semiotics as a theoretical departure, the researcher argues that the characteristics of wordless picturebooks can serve as motivating factors that could contribute to developing a more positive attitude to reading in South Africa.

Internationally, there is a large volume of literature which advocates the use of wordless books in literacy development, yet little research exists on their use in the South African context. Furthermore, the majority of research investigating the value of book sharing has been conducted in the developed world. South Africa has a very low general reading rate, and despite a growing support for literacy development in mother tongue, there still exists a lack of indigenous language picturebooks for very young children. Many families are also simply unable to afford books. As a result, many children are not exposed to books or book sharing activities prior to entering formal school, where the focus of reading is not on reading for enjoyment. By systematically moving the reading environment from a community center or pre-school to participant homes, the main aim of this research was to determine the perceptions of the parents /primary caregivers and children that participated in the research regarding the value of utilizing wordless picturebooks. The researcher aimed go gain an understanding of how wordless picturebooks could assist in ensuring that literacy poor families are supported as a child's first educator.

The research was based on participative action research, and was conducted in three literacy poor areas of Gauteng. Qualitative data was collected by means of focus group and semi-structured individual interviews before and after participants attended a reading programme that spanned over a four to six-week period. Prior to the reading programme, a story collection workshop was hosted at two of the research sites, and the stories collected from the participants was used by the researcher to create wordless picturebooks. The use of these books were subsequently pilot tested at the third research site, whereas existing wordless picture books were used at the first two sites. An initial

sample of 42 parents/primary caregivers and their pre-school child were included in the study, however low participant retention resulted in a significantly smaller sample that completed the research with only 14 parents/primary caregivers having attended all the sessions of the reading programme. It should however be noted that even though the number of participants that completed the *entire* programme, in other words, who attended all sessions, was low, data pertaining to the reading experience after the implementation of the programme was collected from 39 participants in total.

Thematic analysis of the data was conducted, and themes that pertained to aspects of Design (as a central notion in Multiliteracies), Multimodality and participant generated content were identified. The key findings indicated that wordless picturebooks can be viewed as a valuable tool in fostering a culture of reading in the South African context. Participants reported that they were reading more at home, and that the activity was enjoyable, compared to previous reading experiences. Furthermore, the research findings highlighted factors that influence parent-child reading programmes within the context of South African, literacy poor areas. It is recommended the genre warrants more local attention and that larger-scale research studies be conducted with more diverse populations.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie het gefokus op die invloed van 'n deelnemende program waarin boeke sonder woorde vir gesamentlike ouer-kind lees en, meer algemeen, vir die ontwikkeling van 'n leeskultuur in die ouerhuis gebruik is. Die navorsing is in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks in mindergegoede sosio-ekonomiese gebiede in Gauteng uitgevoer, gegrond op die uitgangspunt van die navorser as illustreerder. Met multimodale sosiale semiotiek as teoretiese grondslag, word aangevoer dat die kenmerke van boeke sonder woorde as motiverende faktore kan dien wat kan bydra tot die ontwikkeling van 'n positiewer gesindheid jeens lees in Suid-Afrika.

Daar bestaan 'n groot hoeveelheid internasionale literatuur ter ondersteuning van die gebruik van boeke sonder woorde in die ontwikkeling van geletterdheid, dog bestaan daar min navorsing oor die gebruik van hierdie boeke in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Voorts is die oorwig van bestaande navorsing oor die waarde van saamlees ("book sharing") in ontwikkelde lande onderneem. In Suid-Afrika is die leesgewoonte oor die algemeen swak gevestig ten spyte van toenemende steun vir moedertaalgebaseerde geletterdheidsontwikkeling. Daar bestaan steeds 'n gebrek aan prentboeke in die inheemse tale wat vir jong kinders geskik is. Talle gesinne kan ook nie boeke bekostig nie. Die gevolg hiervan is dat baie kinders nie aan boeke of saamlees-aktiwiteite blootgestel word alvorens hulle met met hul formele skoolopleiding begin nie, waar die fokus ook nie op lees bloot vir die genot daarvan is nie. Deur die leesomgewing stelselmatig van 'n gemeenskapsentrum of crèche na die deelnemers se woonomgewing te verskuif, was die hoofdoel van hierdie navorsing om vas te stel wat die persepsies van ouers of primêre versorgers is van die waarde van die gebruik van boeke sonder woorde in die ouerhuis. Hierdeur is gepoog om begrip te ontwikkel vir die wyse waarop boeke sonder woorde minder-geletterde gesinne in hul taak as die kind se eerste opvoeder kan ondersteun.

Die navorsing is gebaseer op aktiewe deelnemende navorsing en is onderneem in drie minder-geletterde omgewings in Gauteng. Kwalitatiewe data is by wyse van fokusgroep- en individuele semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude ingesamel; voor en na die deelnemers se bywoning van 'n leesprogram wat oor 'n tydperk van vier tot ses weke gestrek het. 'n Werkwinkel is voor die aanvang van die leesprogram by twee van die drie navorsingspunte aangebied waartydens stories vertel is. Die inligting wat tydens die werkwinkel verkry is, is

gebruik om boeke sonder woorde te skep. Hierdie boeke is daarna by die derde navorsingspunt getoets, terwyl bestaande boeke sonder woorde by die ander twee navorsingspunte gebruik is. Die steekproef in die studie het aanvanklik uit 42 ouers/primêre versorgers en hul voorskoolse kind bestaan, maar as gevolg van 'n hoë uitvalsyfer het 'n veel kleiner getal deelnemers die navorsing voltooi, met slegs 14 ouers/primêre versorgers wat al die sessies in die leesprogram bygewoon het. Daar moet egter in ag geneem word dat hoewel betreklik min van die deelnemers die volle program voltooi het, dit wil sê al die sessies bygewoon het, is data oor die leeservaring na die implementering van die die program van altesaam 39 deelnemers bekom.

Data is tematies ontleed en temas wat betrekking het op aspekte van Ontwerp (as 'n sentrale tema in Multigeletterdheid), Multimodaliteit en deelnemer-gegenereerde inhoud is geïdentifiseer. Die kernbevindinge van die navorsing dui daarop dat boeke sonder woorde as 'n waardevolle instrument kan dien om 'n leeskultuur in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks te bevorder. Die deelnemers het aangedui dat hulle meermale tuis lees en dat die leesaktiwiteit genotvol was vergeleke met vorige leeservarings. Voorts kan die navorsingsbevindinge faktore wat die implementering van ouer-kind leesprogramme binne die konteks van die minder-geletterde gebiede in Suid-Afrika beïnvloed, toelig. Daar word aanbeveel dat daar in die plaaslike konteks meer aandag aan dié genre gegee word en dat verdere navorsing op 'n groter skaal en met meer diverse populasies onderneem word.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1   INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

In a February 2015 address at the youth engagement Harare Library in Khayelitsha, South African Deputy President, Cyril Ramaphosa, concluded his speech with a quote from the preamble to the National Development Plan[1]. Describing the South Africa we should see in 2030, Ramaphosa quoted from the plan by stating:

> We love reading. All our citizens read, write, converse, and value ideas and thought. We are fascinated by scientific invention and its use in the enhancement of our lives. We live the joy of speaking many of our languages. We know our history and that of other peoples.

Although Ramaphosa was describing a vision for 2030, current reading statistics in South Africa are not yet as positive. According to statistics of the Department of Basic Education (2015), only 14% of the population read often, with only 5% of parents reading with their children. A low general reading rate exists in South Africa and books are generally considered in terms of their educational value, rather than for enjoyment (SABDC, 2007). In 2007, the South Africa Book Development Council (SABDC) conducted an investigation into the literacy habits in South African homes. Of the surveyed homes, 51% had no books in their homes. These results indicate that many South African parents do not have a reading culture of their own and, as a result, children are not encouraged to read for enjoyment at home. Poverty and time constraints also have an effect on parents' ability to participate in reading activities at home. Consequently, many children are only exposed to books when they start attending school (Du Plessis, in Van Heerden, 2008). Louw and Louw (2014: 176) suggest that South African children 'lag behind' in terms of emergent literacy, as both provincial and national assessments by the Department of Basic Education[2] (2011) point to a high percentage of South African children who do not obtain basic literacy skills in their first three years at school. One of the possibilities that Louw and Louw (2014: 178) cite for this is a lack of parental involvement. They note that:

> Research has consistently emphasised the input of adults, especially parents in the cognitive and language development of their children. However, it is estimated that only 10 – 14% of parents in developing countries such as SA provide cognitively stimulating materials to their children, while

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[1] The National Development Plan is a plan for the country to 'eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 through uniting South Africans, unleashing the energies of its citizens, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capability of the state, and leaders working together to solve complex problems' (National Planning Commission).

[2] These studies were conducted over a period of 8 years

only 11 – 33% of parents actively involve their children in cognitively stimulating activities (Walker et al., 2007).

Due to the influence that cognitive under-stimulation has had – in particular, on the developing world – the importance of activities that are cognitively stimulating, such as joint reading, is receiving renewed interest (Vally 2012, in Louw & Louw, 2014: 178). Nobuntu Mpendulo[3] (in Moyo, 2015). The Director for the City of Johannesburg Library and Information Services Directorate, emphasises reading interventions before school as a route that needs to be considered to guarantee better reading results in later phases of children's education. David Harrison (in Mulgrew, 2012) echoes this sentiment in his statement:

> [W]e have to place more value on reading than just for school preparation … It's understanding that our society needs parents who have a strong bond with their children and create active, informed citizens. That can all stem from a strong background of reading and exploration.

Educational books can, of course, be used in the home for joint reading. However, these books are generally created for 'strictly educational purposes' and may not replicate the same experience of reading purely for enjoyment. They may also further perpetuate the view of reading as a purely educational activity.

In their paper investigating children's early literacy learning in family and community contexts, Spedding, Harkins, Makin and Whiteman (2007: 5) note that international research has consistently confirmed that socio-economic and educational disadvantages have a detrimental effect on developmental outcomes for children. These disadvantages are further connected to low levels of literacy achievement. Although the paper was written in Australia, it highlights areas that are also critical to the South African reading context, such as the finding that indigenous children and children who reside in rural areas are particularly at risk of low literacy. Page Ahead's Children's Literacy Programme (2014) suggests that children who lack exposure to early reading generally do not perform well academically and tend to have low levels of self-esteem and confidence. Consequently, they are at a higher risk for drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy and delinquency. There is an observable link between illiteracy and poverty (Mahala, 2010: 12) and thus, the children who are most at risk are living under adverse socio-economic conditions, in which families are often unable to afford books and parents are unable to, or simply do not, read with their children. There is a large number of children in South Africa who live in adverse conditions. A report on Childhood Poverty in South Africa (ACCESS, 2002: 2) established that an estimated 11 million children between the ages of 0 and 18 were

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[3]Mpendulo was speaking at an event where 50 early childhood centres received books and toys; the result of a partnership between the City of Johannesburg Library and Information Services and the Biblionef South Africa NGO (Moyo, 2015).

living in dire poverty in South Africa, whereas another 14.3 million children were living in poverty. In addition to the dire financial situation highlighted above, another integral aspect that impedes children's early exposure to books is the fact that they may have an illiterate parent/primary caregiver.

Despite these adverse conditions, the study by Spedding et al. (2012: 4) reminds the reader of the "need to challenge the deficit view of families and ensure they are supported and affirmed in their role as children's first literacy educators and equal partners in supporting children's early literacy learning". The Wordworks report, *Narrowing the Literacy Gap: Strengthening language and literacy development between birth and six years for children in South Africa*, compiled by Shelley O'Carroll and Rebecca Hickman (2012: 4), states that "[w]hile the vast majority of children in South Africa now receive formal schooling, children living in poverty still have much less chance of learning to read and write successfully".

Early language development from birth to three years should focus on developing a strong language base in a child's mother tongue. Research shows that "the better developed the conceptual foundation of children's first language, the more likely children are to develop similarly high levels of conceptual abilities in their second language" (O'Carroll & Hickman, 2012: 13). O'Carroll and Hickman (2012: 13) identify three principal areas of support that specifically assist early language development at this stage:

- parents' and caregivers' verbal interaction with and responsiveness to their children;
- engagement with children through activities such as storytelling and singing songs;
- shared book reading.

Shared book reading specifically provides opportunities for developing language and, more importantly for this research, a love of books from an early age. However, there are a variety of ways to read books with young children. O'Carroll and Hickman (2012: 15) assert that the frequency and duration of shared reading is relevant, as is the style and quality of the activity.

Internationally, there is a large volume of literature which advocates the use of wordless picturebooks in literacy development (Crawford & Hade, 2000: 67). Yet, there have been few investigations into the use of the genre in the South African context. In addition, there are very few locally published wordless picturebooks available in the country and the market is dominated by overseas imports, generally from Europe or America. The wordless picturebooks that do exist locally lean heavily on an educational label and present a lack of variety in illustrative style.

Stewig (in Dowhower, 1997: 65) is of the opinion that due to the visually oriented nature of children today, wordless picturebooks is a genre that can motivate reluctant readers. The genre can be argued

to be more accessible to readers, especially those with low literacy levels, as they do not require the decoding of words. The books have no right or wrong interpretation and, as such, they are less corrective by nature than books containing text. They therefore lead to more divergent types of thinking (Crawford & Hade, 2000: 69). Due to their innate characteristics, wordless picturebooks could contribute to developing a more positive attitude to books in general. This shift in attitude could foster a culture of reading that parents can transfer to their children.

Norton (1983: 153) notes the worth of wordless picturebooks when used with children from diverse circumstances, as they enable the enjoyment of the same book by a variety of cultures. The readers (children or adults) can become 'authors' in a sense, providing the words to go with the pictures as a way to create a story. This opportunity for readers to respond in their own ways also creates multiple narratives from the same book, as the genre does not prescribe a specific interpretation (Williams, 1994: 38). Wordless picturebooks are often used in beginner reading experiences and have been linked to the development of early literacy. This primarily because they encourage language development as a result of the reader being required to verbalise the narrative. Written language and creative thought can also be encouraged through their use (Whalen, 1994).

The genre harnesses many of the benefits found in storytelling, which is a powerful framework for understanding texts. Greene (1988: 2) states that "[t]he child's introduction to literature is through the ear". Through listening to stories, children acquire an awareness of various forms of the written language. They are discovering what print 'sounds' like. The use of these books in joint reading activities may create an enjoyable connotation with voluntary reading for young children, as parents can make storytelling and reading a warm, enjoyable activity (Greene, 1998: 2).

Little research on the production and use of wordless books in the South African context exists, with Katherine Arbuckle's (2004: 445–448) article, *The language of pictures: Visual literacy and print materials for Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)* being one of only a handful of a few local sources the researcher could locate. Angela Schaffer and Kathy Watters (2003) included wordless picturebooks in their baseline report on the First Words in Print project, which aimed to make books available to children and educators in literacy-poor areas and assess the reaction to these.

Twanette Acker's (2012) master's study, *The Patterns of Development in Generated Narratives of a Group of Typically Developing South African Children Aged 5 to 9 Years,* identified a wordless picturebook as an appropriate means to elicit a narrative from participants in her research. Her study gives insight into the use of wordless picturebooks as a locally relevant and important assessment tool. Acker found that normative-based assessment materials are very limited in South Africa, and

that those that were commercially available were often inappropriate, due to the complex nature of narratives and the influence of socio-economic, linguistic and cultural factors.

Through a social semiotic and multimodal analysis of wordless picturebooks, this study aims to argue the strengths of the genre as they pertain to the South African context. This will be done from the researcher's point of view as an illustrator working in South Africa. Building on her MPhil study, the researcher decided on the inclusion of an empirical study as a means to investigate if, and how, wordless picturebooks can be used in joint reading activities between a child and their parent or primary caregiver in the home.

The researcher's interest in the proposed topic is the result of the project undertaken for a MPhil study. Through a social semiotic and narratological analysis of wordless picturebooks, as well as a conceptualisation of the medium in her practical work, the strengths of the medium as applied to the South African context were debated. An empirical study formed part of this research, in an effort to better understand how wordless picturebooks could work in joint reading between parents and children. It was found that wordless picturebooks were successful in the interactive reading process between parent/primary caregiver and child. They were able to successfully navigate and create stories using the books as a starting point. The researcher's fundamental argument was that the creation, production and use of this genre of picturebooks should be looked at more closely. However, the aforementioned research was conducted at a community centre in a controlled setting, which was structured by the researcher (namely, The Ikhaya Trust Centre in Stellenbosch). Researchers and educators in many fields have recognised that children learn and develop in the context of their natural environments and have studied how everyday lives affect children's health, physical, social and educational outcomes (NC Department of Health & Human Services, 2002: 4). Mary Spagnola and Barbara H. Fiese (2007: 296), in their article *Family Routines and Rituals; A Context for Development in the Lives of Young Children,* found that daily routines may serve as a vehicle for embedded interventions[4]. "By capitalising on pre-existing routines or assisting families in creating new routines, the burden of change may be reduced" (Fiese & Wamboldt, 2001, in Spagnola & Fiese, 2007: 296). They also actively encourage practitioners and parents to collaborate in finding ways to commend their children's achievements in the rituals and routines of family life.

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[4] Defined as "the use of intentional teaching strategies to address a specific learning goal within the context of everyday activities, routines, and transitions at home, at school, or in the community" (Early Childhood SRBI Embedded Strategies Manual, 2001: 2)

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1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

Cooper, Vally, Cooper, Radford, Sharples and Murray (2013: 143) note that the majority of research regarding the value of book-sharing has been conducted in the developed world. Yet, children in low income, developing countries are exposed to socio-economic and family risk factors that are often associated with compromised language, intellectual and literacy development. Despite growing support for literacy development in a mother tongue, the South African market continues to be dominated by English and Afrikaans picturebooks for children. Publishers still hesitate publish children's books which are meant purely for enjoyment, in African languages. Reasons for this include financial restrictions on libraries and the low buying power that the audience of these books may have. These circumstances are exacerbated by the large number of linguistic varieties and cultures in South Africa (Johnson, 2009: 12). The availability of books in South African homes, the role of parents in children's education and the socio-economic difficulties that many South African families face need to be considered in relation to the lack of a local reading culture that South Africa is facing. This research focuses on the production of culturally relevant, economically viable wordless picturebooks to encourage a love of reading in the home, regardless of literacy levels of the parent. Furthermore, the research aims to link wordless picturebooks and social semiotics with literacy development in South Africa through a Multimodality or Multiliteracies approach (New London Group 2000; Hodge & Kress, 1988; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

Spagnola and Fiese (2007: 286) further assert that:

> [r]eading routines may support the development of early literacy skills (Fiese, Eckert, & Spagnola, 2005), setting the stage for continued enjoyment of reading into the school years. Routines embedded in joint book reading, … and collaborating to make meaning of a shared story, have been described as 'bridges to literacy' (Rosenkoetter & Barton, 2002).

By systematically moving the reading environment from a community centre to the home, the main aim of this research is to determine the perceptions – regarding the value of wordless picturebooks – of the parents/primary caregivers and children who will participate in the research. An added dimension of the research is the creation of wordless picturebooks by participants, which serves as a means to create content to which participants can relate and to investigate themes that arise in their stories. The ability of the genre to inspire a culture of reading in the home of the participating literacy-poor communities will be investigated.

Statement of the problem:

This research investigates the experience related to a participatory project in which wordless picturebooks are used and designed on parent-child joint reading and the development of a culture

of reading more generally. The research was conducted within the South African context, in low SES areas. The specific research questions to be investigated are listed below.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS, STUDY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The **primary research question** is stated as follows:

How does a participatory project – in which children, parents/primary-caregivers and the researcher participate – influence the various stakeholders' perceptions about the use of wordless picturebooks in the home?

The **sub-questions** are:

1. What are the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards reading with wordless picturebooks (both parent/primary caregiver and child); namely, do they find value in taking part in this activity at home?

2. Are participants able to incorporate reading with wordless picturebooks as part of their daily routine and if they do, how do they go about doing so?

3. How do participants experience reading wordless picturebooks that are produced in and by their community, as opposed to books provided by schools and libraries?

4. What kinds of themes are introduced when parents and children are able to create their own stories for books or to 'produce' and create their own wordless picturebooks?

5. What kinds of multiple narratives emerged in visual texts produced by parents and children from different community groups during the reading sessions?

The aim of the study was to explore the use of wordless picturebooks in parent-child reading in the home as a means to foster a culture of reading.

The following **objectives** were set for the study:

1. To contextualise wordless picturebooks as a genre;

2. To conduct an empirical study on the use of wordless picturebooks, in which children and their parents/primary care-giver are invited to take books home to read;

3. To host a story collection workshop in which parents/primary caregivers and their children could work together to create their own wordless picturebooks, with the aim of creating content to which they could relate;

4. To investigate the perceptions and attitudes towards reading with wordless picturebooks;

5. To investigate whether participants are able to incorporate reading with wordless picturebooks as part of their daily routine;

6.   To investigate how participants experience reading wordless picturebooks;

7.   To investigate the themes that are introduced when parents and children are able to create their own stories for books;

8.   To investigate what kinds of multiple narratives emerged in visual texts produced by parents and children;

9.   To reach conclusions and make recommendations regarding the use of wordless picturebooks as a means of fostering a culture of reading in South African homes.

1.4   THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Bezemer, Diamantopoulou, Jewitt, Kress & Mavers (2012: 1) identify multimodal social semiotics as a "theoretical perspective that brings all socially organised resources that people use to make meaning into one descriptive and analytical domain". From this stance, the study approaches an analysis of wordless picturebooks and the means which participants use to create meaning.

One of the key arguments of this framework is that human communication is never produced from one mode alone, but is always part of a multimodal ensemble (Stein, 2008: 24). Consequently, wordless picturebooks can be understood in terms of what modes can do or, in other words, what their affordances and constraints are and how these work together in multimodal ensembles (Stein, 2008: 25). Modes can comprise, for example, images, writing, gestures, gazes, speeches, postures, illustrations and speech. When considering the development of preliterate skills which research has linked with wordless picturebooks, the genre can be viewed as a multimodal form of communication, in which the conventional margins between language and image are decentred (Stein, 2008: 24, referring to Iedema, 2003: 33). Stein (2008: 19) states that the term 'multimodality' in literacy education is mainly "associated with social semiotic theory, referred to in the literature as 'multimodal social semiotics', 'multimodal literacy' and 'a multimodal social semiotic approach'". Although the study is not focused on the development of literacy, it does form an important aspect of the South African context.

The South African context comprises 11 official languages, which are a testament to its diverse population, which consists of various different cultures. As a consequence, books created for the South African context require an awareness of cultural conventions in meaning-making. As a theoretical framework, social semiotics addresses this by placing the sign-maker – in this case, the reader – in the centre of the meaning-making process, acknowledging that the environment, the

needs of the sign-maker and the cultural formation of modes play an integral part in interpreting signs (Kress, 2010: 116–117).

1.5   OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOTY

1.5.1   Research Design and Methods

The study follows a qualitative approach within a constructionist paradigm. According to McRoy (1995, in Fouché & Delport, 2011: 65), the qualitative paradigm stems from an interpretative approach and is holistic in nature. Its main aims are the understanding of social life and the meaning that is attached to everyday life by people. In line with the qualitative approach, the study focuses on describing and understanding human behaviour, rather than predicting outcomes. A constructionist approach to research suggests that reality can only be socially and personally constructed, rather than objectively existing 'out there'. It follows that the subject under investigation should be actively involved, as reality can only be known by those whose experience is personal (Fouché & Schurink, 2011: 310). Paradigms associated with constructionism include participatory action research (PAR).

PAR forms the research design for this study. The PAR research design allows that "qualitative features of an individual's feelings, views, and patterns are revealed without control or manipulation from the researcher" (MacDonald, 2012: 34). Participants of PAR are active in making informed decisions in all aspects of the research process, with the primary focus of all research activity being to impart social change through a specific action (or actions) (MacDonald, 2012: 34).

As a means to further investigate the use of wordless picturebooks, a reading project was conducted across three early childhood development centres or crèches based in Gauteng, South Africa; namely the Funanani Early Childhood Development Centres in Shoshanguve (Site 1) and Mamelodi (Site 2), as well as Happy Sabby Day Care (Site 3) in the Melutsi Township, outside Danville in Pretoria West. Research at the first two sites (Shoshanguve and Mamelodi) was conducted from September to November 2015. The aim of the reading project at these two sites was to conduct an empirical investigation into the use of wordless picturebooks in practice, to establish the feasibility of the proposed theory in practice and to produce content-relevant wordless picturebooks for the community to keep after the completion of the project. These books were created from stories told by research participants; these participants were also actively involved in the production and illustration of the wordless picturebooks. By assuming active and full participation in the research process, people and communities themselves have the opportunity to mobilise, organise and implement individual and/or collective action (Selener, 1997, in Morrell, n.d.: 6). In March 2016,

research commenced at Happy Sabby Day Care. No story collection workshop was hosted at this site and the main aim was to pilot test the books created at the previous sites. A four-week reading programme was hosted at this site. The reading programmes are discussed in Chapter 3, which provides a detailed outline of the research methodology for this paper.

The crèches were selected using purposive, availability sampling and were identified as being located in low-literacy and low-income areas (low-literacy is often linked to lack of exposure to books). Participants were also selected using purposive availability sampling. The sampling criteria stipulated that the participants were required to be:

a)   a child enrolled at the selected day-care/crèche or early childhood development (ECD)

        centre, aged between 3 and 6 years old;

b)   the child's parent or primary care-giver.

The parents were purposively sampled with the help of the crèche managers or principals at the respective sites and were asked by the school to volunteer for the study. They were invited to an introductory session, during which the purpose of the research was explained. They were then invited to take part in an initial focus group after an informed consent form had been signed.

Desktop research was initially used to establish a concise history and development of wordless picturebooks in South Africa, as well as their current use in educational environments. During the reading programme, data was collected from the research participants after every stage of the programme. Data collection at all three sites made use of focus groups for the initial discussion with participants, which aimed to determine their current reading practices and history of reading. At Sites 1 and 2, further data was collected during the story collection workshop, in which parents/primary caregivers and children worked together to create stories that were used in the creation of wordless picturebooks. The data at this stage of the research was in the form of drawings and writing by the participants. For the remainder of the programme, at Sites 1 and 2, data was collected using semi-structured interviews (Greef, 2011: 353) or group interviews, depending on participant preference and availability. Participative action research requires that participants be actively involved in research decisions. At Site 3, data was collected in the form of focus groups, as this was the method with which participants were most comfortable.

Qualitative data analysis is a "process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorising" (Shurink, Fouche & De Vos, 2011: 399). The process of data analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke, 2006 (in Braun & Clarke, 2013: 121) was used throughout the process of thematic data analysis in this study; namely reading and familiarising, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the report.

Ethical clearance was granted by the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (HUMANIORA) on 20 November 2014. Research participation was voluntary and all measures were taken to ensure that participants were protected at all times. Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time without any repercussions, and were provided with informed consent forms. At the sites where children were involved in the research (S1 and S2), assent forms were given to participants.

1.6   BOUNDARIES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although illiteracy forms a major part of the context in which this study is grounded, it is not the focus of the study and the study does not attempt to measure or alleviate illiteracy rates. Rather, illiteracy is regarded as an obstacle to fostering a love and culture of reading (Le Roux, 2012: 40). The research argues that, through their ability to harness the tradition of storytelling, wordless picturebooks can help foster a culture of reading. The benefits of this could create an environment that may assist in improving literacy, but the focus is on a culture of reading, rather than illiteracy.

This research acknowledges that as a white female, the researcher comes from a different cultural and historical background than the majority of research participants; a fact that needs to be taken into consideration. As a result, it is not assumed that she can suggest, or simply create, relevant local content for wordless picturebooks for certain communities or cultures. The reliance on research participants to be actively involved in the creation of stories and relevant content is one of the aspects of this study that seeks to empower communities through their participation in this project.

1.7   STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This study is structured in the following manner:

Chapter 2: This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks for the study; namely, social semiotics and multimodality. Multiliteracies is approached as a backdrop to understanding changing perspectives of literacy and is a foundation for multimodality. The researcher also discusses multimodality in education, reading and children's picturebooks.

Chapter 3: Wordless picturebooks as a genre is investigated in this chapter, which traces the characteristics and history of the genre. The researcher outlines wordless picturebooks as multimodal recourse in a multimodal social semiotic analysis of the genre, before proceeding to a brief discussion

of narrative in wordless picturebooks. The expectation of the reader and reader response studies are considered as a means to explore the ways in which wordless picturebooks are read.

Chapter 4: This chapter considers wordless picturebooks in relation to early childhood reading – reading for pleasure and joint reading – and considers previous studies in relation to the social learning theories of Vygotsky and Bandura. Following this, the South African context – in terms of reading and literacy – mother tongue education and its publishing industry is discussed. Socio-economic factors that contribute to South Africa's lack of a reading culture are briefly touched on in this chapter, before looking at the importance of mother tongue reading and the availability of children's books in mother tongue. The production and use of wordless picturebooks in South Africa provides information on access and availability to the genre. The chapter concludes with an outline of studies that have been conducted using wordless picturebooks in the South African context.

Chapter 5: The research methodology is described and motivations for methodological decisions are elaborated in this chapter. This chapter includes an explanation on the sampling methods used to reach participants for the study and explains in depth the reading programmes hosted at each site. Ethical considerations, especially with regard to working in under-resourced areas, are considered. The chapter is foregrounded by a discussion on the context of the research with reference to South Africa's political history. Two Apartheid laws that should be considered in reference to the study – namely, Bantu Education and the segregation of communities – are specifically noted. Socio-economic factors that continue to contribute to a lack of culture of reading are then discussed, especially with regard to the family context, as the study focuses on reading within the home.

Chapter 6: This chapter presents the findings of the primary research, which are discussed with reference to the theoretical framework, literature review and contextual factors. A discussion of participant reaction to wordless picturebooks during the course of the reading programme follows an initial discussion on the implementation of the reading programme, with particular reference to participant retention. The initial focus group, which sought to establish participant reading habits before the implementation of the reading programme, serves as a means to trace changes in reading behaviour and attitudes as reported in the rest of the findings. Some of the wordless picturebooks produced during the reading programme are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 7: In concluding the study, Chapter 7 provides a recap on the research process and presents key findings in relation to the research questions which guided the study. Factual conclusions are drawn and recommendations made, based on the findings from the reading programme, before these are discussed in terms of what they may mean for the bigger, conceptual picture within the South

African context. This chapter also includes a critical reflection on the research process and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The theoretical framework forms the conceptual lens from which the reading of wordless picturebooks will be discussed, analysed and interpreted within the South African context. Multimodal social semiotics provides a theoretical point of departure, as it enables one to look at all socially organised resources employed by people in meaning-making (Bezemer, Diamantopoulou, Jewitt, Kress & Mavers, 2012: 1). Although the frameworks of social semiotics and multimodality overlap to a large extent, they will be discussed separately before introducing multimodal social semiotics as an approach to investigate wordless picturebooks. Related to multimodal social semiotics is multiliteracies, an approach to literacies which includes not only multiple forms of literacy, but also multiple modalities.

Pippa Stein (2008: 19) states that the term 'multimodality' in literacy education is mainly "associated with social semiotic theory, referred to in the literature as 'multimodal social semiotics', 'multimodal literacy' and 'a multimodal social semiotic approach'". Multimodality suggests the manner in which people communicate is never done in a single mode[5], but is always part of a multimodal ensemble (Stein, 2008: 24). Stein (2008: 25) writes that:

> Multimodal social semiotics is interested in developing a theory and a methodology in which all modes are described together and describable together. This means understanding what modes can do, their different affordances and how they work together in multimodal ensembles.

Wordless picturebooks are part of these multimodal forms of communication, where, as Stein (2008: 24, referring to Iedema 2003: 33) states: "language is decentred as well as the traditional boundaries between language, image, page layout and document design [are blurred]". In their article, *Using a Social Semiotic Approach to Multimodality: Researching Learning in Schools, Museums and Hospitals,* Bezemer, Jewitt, Kress and Mavers (2012: 1) state that a multimodal social semiotic approach places emphases on meaning-making in *all* modes and brings these into 'one descriptive and analytical domain'. Modes can include image, writing, speech and gesture – to name a few.

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[5] A mode is a set of socially and culturally shaped resources used by people to make meaning. Mode categorises a 'channel' of representation or communication. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, in MODE 2012).

This chapter serves to create a discourse between the main theoretical perspectives used in this study and will argue that, due to their nature, wordless picturebooks can and should be considered as a viable tool in encouraging a culture of reading in the South African context.

2.2   THE HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL SEMIOTICS

Social semiotics describes signs, sign-makers and sign-making and is based on a semiotic account developed by linguist, Michael Halliday (1978), in which meaning-making is conceptualised as a choice from a range of interlocking options. In his book, *Language as Social Semiotic* (1978), Halliday contends that the grammar of a language is not a set of rules but 'a resource for making meanings' (Stein, 2008: 20). In conveying the essence of social semiotics, Halliday states that: "[l]anguage is as it is because of what it has to do", the hypothesis being that language, and in turn all semiotic systems, have evolved and they manifest in their current states because of 'the meanings that people have perceived the need to create in order to communicate'. Semiotic systems, such as language, then reflect, construe and exact our reality (Andersen, Boeriis, Maagerø, & Tønnessen, 2015: 11). Halliday's linguistic theory was the foundation on which Hodge and Kress (1988) developed their theory of social semiotics, focusing on accounting for the different ways in which people have interacted with 'semiotic resources' in an assortment of societies in history (Stein, 2008: 20).

In 1979, Hodge and Kress published a book entitled *Language as Ideology,* in which they recognise the importance of the social dimension, or context, in creating meaning from texts. However, they argue that the foundation for any analysis should remain the structures and processes of text and language. Verbal language is always foremost and independent in these. In their 1988 book, *Social Semiotics*, the authors (Hodge & Kress, 1988: vii) acknowledge the limitations that their aforementioned assumption posed, and argue that social structures and processes, messages and meanings are the proper standpoints from which the attempt to analyse the meaning of systems arises. They further assert that meaning is not only limited to words, but manifests itself in alternative systems of meaning; such as aural, visual, behavioural and other code structures. This led to their second premise, which believes that no single code can be completely understood or successfully studied in isolation. In further work, social semiotic theory considers all modes of communication as requiring equally serious attention. Thus Hodge and Kress' (1988) publication is the foundational text for social semiotics and how it is currently used.

2.2.1   An Overview of Semiotics: a Predecessor

In order to understand how social semiotics has built on previous theories, semiotics, as a "general science" (de Saussure, in Chandler, 2014) needs to be introduced. However, it should be noted that semiotics serves to contextualise social semiotics, rather than act as a framework for this study. Semiotics is the "science of the life of signs in society: and was initially delineated by Ferdinand de Saussure (1974, in Hodge & Kress, 1988: 4). The word 'semiotics' most often refers to the "study of the innate capacity of human beings to produce and understand signs of all kinds" (Sebeok, 2001: xii).

Semiotics is not only a science comprised of a body of findings and theories, but also a technique for considering anything that produces signs (Sebeok, 2001: 5). Contemporary semiotics looks not only at the sign in isolation, but rather as part of a sign system. Media or genres are generally classified as sign systems. In semiotic terms, all aspects found in a culture can be theorised as forms of communication and, as such, everything can be organised in ways that can be posited as a set of rules or principles, similar to what is seen in the structure and use of language. Semiotics offers "the promise of a systematic, comprehensive and coherent study of communications phenomena as a whole, not just instances of it" (Hodge & Kress, 1988: 1). Semiotic analysis can extend to any media in which information is communicated; for example, television, radio, posters and magazines. Within these, "different media, sets and subsets of information layers and clusters" can be found (Shitemi, 2009: 82).

Semioticians investigate how meanings are made. This extends beyond communication to the creation and preservation of reality; for example, in the social formation of modes, discussed later. Chandler (2014) writes that "semiotics and that branch of linguistics known as semantics[6] have a common concern with the meaning of signs", but John Sturrock (1986: 22, in Chandler, 2014) argues that "whereas semantics focuses on *what* words mean, semiotics is concerned with *how* signs mean". As a framework, semiotics generally distinguishes between three broad media families: verbal, visual, and aural. Human understanding and experience is intrinsically multisensory, and Genosko (1994, in Chandler, 2002:3) notes that   "[d]ifferent media and genres provide different frameworks for representing experience, facilitating some forms of expression and inhibiting others". The 'first principle' of semiotic systems then, as argued by Emile Benveniste (in Chandler, 2002: 3), 'is that they are not 'synonymous'. In other words, we cannot say "the same thing"' in systems which are based

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[6] Semantics is the study of the relationship of signs and what they stand for (Chandler, 2014);

on different elements (Innis, 1986: 235, in Chandler, 2002: 3). This is similar to the concept of affordances, which is discussed under social semiotics (refer 2.4.1).

Semiotics examines signs and symbols[7] as material expressions of experiences and ideas. A sign, in its most basic sense, is a representative image or icon which can manifest as written word, an image or picture, an object or even a gesture or sound. Saussure's explanation of the sign is a form made up of something physical – such as sounds, letters and gestures. The form that the sign assumed was termed the *signifier*. The image or *concept* to which the signifier refers – is called the called the *signified* and relation that holds between the two is *signification* (Sebeok, 2001: 5-6).

The association between signifier and signified is considered by Saussure to be an arbitrary one; that is to say, it is based on a random choice, and that human beings and/or societies have established this connection at will. Most words function in this manner, as there is no apparent reason why a specific word should signify a specific meaning. However, Charles Pierce[8], another pioneer of semiotic theory, made provision for more than just arbitrary signs. His classification also includes indexical and iconic signs (Golden & Gerber, 1990: 204). Although there exist varying amounts and different definitions of the classifications of distinctive signs, Peirce's fundamental classification is very widely used in semiotic studies. Regarded by Pierce as 'the most fundamental' division of signs, Chandler (2014) writes that this categorisation is more practical as a classification differing 'modes of relationship' connecting sign vehicles and their referents[9], rather than as distinct 'types of signs'. For the purposes of this study, this classification system serves to demonstrate the basic manner in which wordless picturebooks would function (refer to Chapter 3), and as such, this paper will not provide an in-depth analysis of signs apart from that of Pierce. The formation of these signs is important in understanding social semiotics, in that signs are culturally specific and socially formed; consequently, a brief discussion is warranted. The three signs that will be discussed are symbolic, iconic and indexical.

A *symbolic sign* is a mode in which the signifier bears no resemblance to what it refers to in reality. It is essentially arbitrary or conventional. Consequently, the connection needs to be learnt. Examples include language in general, quantities, Morse code, road signs and national flags. In *iconic signs,* the signifier resembles or imitates the signified. It recognisably looks, sounds, feels, tastes or possesses another quality that is similar to the signified. Examples here include a portrait, a cartoon, sound

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[7] A symbol is a sign that stands for its referent in an arbitrary, conventional way.
[8] Pierce suggested a triadic relationship concerning the sign in which the interpretant and the object is fundamental to the practice of semiosis. In Piercian terms, the signifier is referred to as a *representamen* - 'something that does the representing'. He termed the referent (the thing that a word or phrase denotes) the *object*; an entity displaced from its (real-world) context of occurrence. The *interpretant* is used to explain the meaning that an individual gets from a sign, suggesting that it entailed a form of interpretation or 'negotiation' if the sign-user considered the sign socially, contextually, personally, etc. to evaluate or respond to what it means (Sebeok, 1994: 6).
[9] A referent is the person or object to which a linguistic expression or other sign or symbol refers.

effects and imitative gestures. Finally, an *indexical sign* directly connects the signifier in some way – be it physically or causally – to the signified (Chandler, 2014).

Sebeok (2001: 7) writes that a message can be constructed on the foundation of a single sign or, more often than not, on combinations of signs, which is known as *text*. The term text is used in reference to a message that can be materially autonomous. In other words, it does not rely on its sender or receiver. As such, texts are usually documented in some way; for example, writing or audio-recording (Chandler, 2014). A text is in effect a 'weaving together' of signs to communicate. The signs that comprise the text belong to specific codes that can be defined as systems bound by paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations (Sebeok, 2001: 7).

Codes, a central concept in semiotics, serve as the framework – or a learned a shared conceptual connection – at work in all uses of signs (language, visual). Thus, codes represent an extensive interpretative organisation used by the addressers and their addressees to encode (the process of creating a message) and decode (the process of interpreting a message) messages. Structural linguist, Roman Jakobson (in Chandler, 2014), underlines that the creation and understanding of texts rely on the existence of codes for communication. Chandler (2014) writes that codes comprise practices which are familiar to the users of the medium. These codes operate in a broad, cultural framework. The reader of a text is required to relate it to applicable 'codes', which at times may also require a knowledge or understanding of applicable sets of conventions for interpreting a sign. As an example, photography "introduced a new way of seeing which had to be learned before it was rendered invisible" (Chaplin, in Chandler, 2014). The reader is required to decode cues as a means to understand the text. Anthropologists regularly find that people in primal tribes experienced initial difficulty decoding photographs and films (Deregowski, 1980, in Chandler, 2014). Semioticians suggest that although repeated exposure makes 'visual language' seem normal, the need to learn how to 'read' different kinds of texts still exists (Chandler, 2014). In a similar sense and within the scope of this study, illustrations act as codes that need to be interpreted by a reader to make sense of a text.

However, despite the impressive achievements it has to its credit, semiotics has been subjected to a series of critiques, including that it has not yet established itself as a single discipline. These have snowballed to challenge the validity of its assumptions and practices. The dominant grounding of this critique has been that the "social dimensions of semiotic systems" are essential in their very character and use; that systems cannot be studies in quarantine (Hodge & Kress, 1988: 12).

2.2.2   Social Semiotics

As previously noted, social semiotics is focused on signs, sign-makers and sign-making (Stein, 2008: 20). The theory builds on Saussure establishing insights by considering the social processes that are involved in forming the 'codes' of language and communication and the implications thereof. In Social Semiotics, meaning-*making* instead of meaning-*use* is accentuated. This shift of emphasis marks the difference between 'traditional', 'Saussurian' semiotics, as it is often referred to, and Social Semiotics. Where traditional Semiotics refers to "*systems* of (existing) signs and their *use*, the latter emphasises the ceaseless *social (re)making* of a set of cultural resources" (Kress, 2011: 242). Kress (2011: 242) writes that:

> In the former, semiotic action is that of *choice* from among existing signs, organized in paradigms; in the latter, semiotic action involves choice of a *signifier* from paradigms, which is then made into a sign according to the interest of the maker in a specific social environment. The new sign becomes available, as a remade signifier, for the *making* of yet other signs. Social semiosis, in other words, is both *choice* of existing signifier-resources and the *making* of signs, newly, from them.

Pippa Stein, in her book *Multimodal Pedagogies in Diverse Classrooms* (2008), identifies five key concepts of social semiotics; namely, (i) the social production of the sign, (ii) the motivated relationship between signifier and signified, (iii) interested action, (iv) design and (v) transformative action. The first of these is the social production of the sign. One of the essential foundations of social semiotics is that signs are socially produced and read, resulting in signs being fluid and changeable, rather than fixed or predetermined (Stein, 2008: 21). Hodge and Kress (1988: 12) had also criticised traditional semiotics' assumption that relevant meanings are unmoving, predetermined, waiting to be unearthed and decoded by the analysts using reference to a coding system that is universal, impersonal and neutral. Social Semiotics recognises that the meaning, which an author hopes a text will produce, is not a given, and that "the struggles and their uncertain outcomes must be studied at the level of social action and their effects in the production of meaning" (Hodge & Kress, 1988: 12). Kress (2011: 242) notes that this shift furthermore has extensive implications for research. The very phrase, 'choice from systems of signs', advocates a very different process and form of agency to the phrase, 'making of signs'. "*Choice* alone focuses attention differently to *choice and sign-making*" (Kress, 2011: 242).

A social semiotic approach to communication has its origin in critiques of Saussure's (1974) distinction between 'langue and parole'[10]. Stein (2008: 21) writes:

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[10] The Swiss linguist, Saussure first made the distinction between langue and parole. *Langue* is the system or code ('le code de la langue') which enables the understanding of the individual messages, whereas *parole* is the terrain of the individual instants of language use, of specific 'utterances' or 'messages,' – be they spoken or written (Heath, 1988: 7).

> Saussure contrasts 'langue' as an abstraction, a closed system of normatively identical forms, with the unpredictable messiness of 'parole', which he defines as 'ephemeral', 'individual' and 'dependent on the will of the speaker'. This focus on 'langue' as a closed, stable system produces a unitary view of language and the idea of a homogenous community of speakers. Meaning-making is divorced from context and from material reality.

As presented by Halliday, social semiotics proposes that the grammar of a language is *not* a code or a set of rules for constructing correct sentences, but a "resource for making meanings" (van Leeuwen, 2005: 3). From a social semiotic approach, semiosis[11] is subsequently not done by individual, unconnected people, but by social practices in communities. Anderson et al. (2015: 11) write that the "functionality of any semiotic system is based on a social understanding of meaning and meaning-making, as signalled with the notion of social semiotics". The central consequence to this shift is that meanings and semiotic systems are formed by changes in social powers. As a result, systems of socially accepted meanings, such as language, are constantly in a state of flux. Gunther Kress (2011: 109-110) writes that a social-semiotic approach orientates itself to the "interests of the *sign-maker* … to the *environment* in which meaning is made … to meaning and to the semiotic/cultural resources which are available for the realisation/materialisation of meaning as a motivated sign". This approach asks:

> Whose interest and agency is at work here in the making of meaning? What meaning is being made here? How is meaning being made? With what resources, in what social environment? and What are the meaning potentials of the resources that have been used?, How can past tense be an indicator of power? How is it that a form that signals distance in time can signal social distance, a distance produced by difference in social power? (Kress, 2011: 109-110).

Theo van Leeuwen (2005: 3), in *Introducing Social Semiotics*, explains that Halliday's idea of grammar should be extended beyond language to include the 'grammar' of other semiotic modes. The term semiotic resources plays an important role in his writing and is revealed as "the actions and artefacts we use to communicate" – regardless of the format in which they appear. In short, social semiotics' focus is concerned with social meaning-making practices of all kinds. Semiotic modes are the systems for meaning-making – or "channels" – for communication. They can be visual, verbal, written or gestural, to name a few. Semiotic modes can be 'multimodal' ensembles, or a combination of modes that work towards a communicative purpose (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

2.2.3   Key Concepts: Discourse, Genre, Style and Modality

As a form of enquiry, social semiotics is anchored on two concepts used in the production of messages and meanings; namely text and discourse. According to Hodge and Kress (1988: 6), 'text' is seen "in

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[11] Semiosis is the action involving the production of meaning

an extended semiotic sense to refer to a structure of messages or message traces which has a socially ascribed unit". Social semiotics views the message as the smallest semiotic form. It has a source, a goal, a context and a purpose, and it creates meaning by functioning on the semiosic plane. The semiosic plane refers to the social practice by which meaning is made. A message's meaning is derived a mimetic[12] or representative function that it performs, which is referred to as the mimetic plane. It is connected with the world to which it refers. Text is associated with the mimetic plane of representations, while discourse is better connected to the semiosic plane of socially constructed meaning (de Oliveira Pimenta & Natividade, 2013: 174). The ways in which semiotic resources are consumed to create meaning is investigated through the analysis of the discourse, genre, style and modality in which they are used.

Similarly, discourse refers to something that is intertwined, but the authors distinguish it from text by emphasising it as "the social process in which texts are embedded", contrasted with text, which is the material object created in discourse (Hodge & Kress, 1988: 6). Discourse[13] can be viewed as the juncture of social systems of organisation with systems of signs in the production of texts. In this juncture, the meanings and values through which a culture is formed can be changed or maintained (Hodge & Kress, 1988: 6). Discourse works by presenting and assessing social practices by regulating activities within specific institutions (for example, medicine or law), the ways in which activities are implemented, who can participate in these and how they should act with regard to their roles and identities. Discourse can be viewed as a manifestation of a socially made body of language (be this verbal, visual or behavioural).

Genres of texts are a "typical forms which link producer, consumer, topic, medium, manner and occasion" (Hodge & Kress, 1988: 6). They serve as regulators for the people who produce texts and serve as a means to create a certain expectation from consumer of a text. Genres are typically socially endorsed classifications of semiotic form and only endure insofar as a particular social group asserts and implements the rules that comprise them (Hodge & Kress, 1988: 6-7). Picturebooks form a genre within children's literature, and wordless picturebooks are classified as a distinct genre within this category. The contemporary use of the word "style" often refers to "a manner of speaking or doing" (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 160) and is seen as indicative of an individual, a school or period; for example, in the romantic style of painting. Styles in social semiotics are broad signifying systems, which connect smaller parts to each other while creating concrete wholes.

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[12] Chandler (2014) states that a mimetic purpose in representation seeks to imitate closely that which it depicts.

[13] Whereas there are many definitions for discourse, this study makes use of the Hodge & Kress (1988) definition, as it is aligned with their theories of social semiotics.

Finally, Modality, a term from linguistics, refers to the "truth value or credibility of statements about, or representations of, the world". Factual expressions of truthfulness convey high modality, whereas lower modalities are expressed by possibilities, hypotheses and suggestions. When applying modality to visual images, the term refers to the manner in which reality relates to representations thereof (Stephens, 2000: 46–47). The concept of modality in social semiotics relates to issues of representation (such as fact versus fiction, and reality versus fantasy) and questions of social interaction, because truth is also a social question in that what is considered true in one context is not in another; and different social groups and establishments favour different kinds of truth (Van Leeuwen 2005: 160, 164). Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 159, in Chandler, 2007: 65) write that truth, from a social semiotics view, arises from the particular values and beliefs of a group and is as a construct of semiosis. Modality can affirm fact over fiction; Hodge and Kress (1988: 122-123) write that, consequently, modality is intrinsically linked with power systems. Modality articulates an affinity between speaker and hearer about the status of the mimetic system and as such expresses solidarity with the expression of power. A high degree of modality (affirmation) may express an agreement with current power systems, whereas a low degree of modality may be a challenge to that system. Modality is consequently one of the crucial indicators in political struggle and is a central means of contestation of ideological systems. It provides an important component of the complex processes through which the dominant, hegemonic systems impose meaning or truth onto the less powerful participant.

Hodge and Kress (1988: 128) suggest that although less delimited than the system of verbal languages[14], readers of visual texts also read modality of such texts in a reasonably predictable fashion. Modality, as context dependent, is coded according to certain orientations. Van Leeuwen (2005: 167–169) identifies naturalistic modality, abstract modality, technological modality and sensory modality as categories for modality in visual texts. Naturalistic modality suggests that the more an image looks like what it is representing, the higher the modality; whereas abstract modality views visual truth as an abstract truth. The more an image represents the 'essence' of what it depicts – the higher its modality. Abstract modality accordingly generally operates in the fields of science and abstract art, where naturalisation is mistrusted (El Refaie, 2010: 164). Technological modality values visual truth based on the practical usefulness of the image; for example, a map's accuracy. Lastly, sensory modality is created by the visual texts that are considered as pleasing or displeasing and is used in a context where gratification matters – such as perfume advertisements or food photographs – and also in contexts where the intensity of an experience is being recreated, such as a dream.

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[14] Verbal language has a highly formulated system of specialised modality markers, cues which readers refer to decide on the plausibility, reliability, credibility, truth, accuracy or facticity of texts within a given genre as representations of some recognisable reality (Chandler, 2014).

2.2.4   On Meaning and Context

Meaning, embedded in the social and in the actuality of the people who make meaning, lies at the heart of social semiotics (Anderson et al., 2015: 216). When considering social semiotics from this stance, context plays an integral role in the creation of meaning. Context is a term used in "methodological accounts to refer to what falls outside the empirical focus of a study, yet is, at the same time, seen as relevant to the interpretation of that empirical focus" (Bezemer, n.d.). It is a crucial art of how [sign] systems create meaning. Meaning is established in the interaction and relationship between texts. The text's task is complex and ultimately functions in both social and ideological contexts. Hodge and Kress (1988: 40) summarise their observations about the function of context as follows:

1.   The context of semiosis (meaning making) itself can be viewed as an organised series of texts. Meanings are allocated to kinds of participants and relationships.

2.   The conduct of participants is constrained by a logonomic system[15]. This system functions through messages about a participant's identity and relationships and signifies status, power and unanimity.

3.   The participants involved in semiosis generally convey messages about the condition of the exchange, as well as their own and each others' roles in the exchange.

4.   When not all participants are directly involved in a semiotic exchange, producers (of meaning) will generally include instructions that outline who produced the text, how it should be consumed, by whom it should be consumed and received and the context for which the text or message was meant.

5.   The set of messages which shapes a particular semiotic exchange will infer a generalised version of social interactions. In other words, every semiotic occurrence has an ideological content[16].

Context also affects how social semioticians look at modes or semiotic resources. Theo van Leeuwen (in Anderson et al., 2015: 153) writes that the conceptualisation of the notion of "sign" in traditional discourses is worrying because of its emphasis is on the connection between signifier and signified,

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[15]Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress (1988) define a logonomic system as combination of meaning-making constraints, which are defined as "a set of rules prescribing the conditions for production and reception of meanings". Logonomic rules are regulated by agents (parents, teachers, employers, university lecturers) yet can be challenged and changed (i.e. the political correctness movement). Logonomic rules are so familiar to participants (at least, to participants with experience of that type of discourse) that they are almost subconscious (Nordquist, s.a.).

[16] Ideology is defined as a "system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy" (Merriam-Webster, 2015), ideological content would as such support a specific ideology.

rather than between practices of sign making and sign interpreting in which semiotic resources are used. Hodge and Kress (1988: 23) write that:

> [A] practical semiotics should have some account of the relationship of semiosis and "reality", that is, the material world that provides the objects of semiosis and semiotic activity. Unless semiotics confronts this relationship, it can have no relevance to the world of practical affairs with its confident assumptions about "reality", and it cannot account for the role of semiotic systems in that world.

A sign simply cannot take away from the context in which it appears. Rather than being fixed and unchanging, signs are resources which people use to "design" meaning. Social semiotics seeks to present an analytical and theoretical framework which can describe meaning-making in a social milieu (Thibault, 1991).

Here again, Kress' (2011: 242) distinction between traditional semiotics and social semiotics is useful. Semiotics entails the use of a stable resource, whereas social semiotics entails the constant (re-)making of that resource. In an education context, Kress (2011: 242) poses that these two positions produce different responses to the question: "What is the relation … between meaning-making, learning and identity; between environments for learning and the potentials for learning?".

Kress (in Anderson et al., 2015: 218) challenges the Saussurian notion of the sign by rejecting the notion that signs are arbitrary, and arguing that this notion is not compatible with the view of signs as socially constructed. The concept of arbitrariness, in the Saussurian sign, only worked in one respect; "namely, that the power of the social was essential to keep the relation of form and meaning together" (Kress, in Anderson et al., 2015: 218). Consequently, Kress's development of social semiotics maintains the conventional part; namely, that it is the power of the social that keeps the sign stable, but removes the notion that arbitrariness as a feature of sign making. Van Leeuwen (2005: 49) speaks about the "motivated sign" – where there is a causal relation between signifier and signified; for example, the steepness of a graph indicating the rate of growth. He further states (in Anderson et al., 2015: 218) that if people *decide* to have arbitrary signs, they will have them – but it is the decision that they want an arbitrary system, rather than the sign itself which makes it arbitrary. Essentially then, not even the arbitrary is arbitrary. Both authors were influenced by Peirce's notion of the iconic sign (discussed earlier), which he understood not only as a visual sign, but as functioning in a metaphorical manner to represent a more general phenomenon. The theory of the motivated sign is comparable to the world of parole – 'the world of real users of signs', including all the complexities that come with them (Stein, 2008: 21). Kress (1997a: 19, in Stein, 2008: 21) writes that "[s]igns are the results of the interest of their makers, and this interest is expressed through the selection of apt signifiers for the expression of the sign maker's meaning".

Stein's (2008: 22) third key concept in social semiotics is that of 'interested action'. The term 'interested' refers to the sign-makers' interest and suggests that signs cannot be neutral. Individual sign-makers do not act in isolation, but rather act as social agents with specific interests, belonging to several groups and with their own interests. Subsequently, it is not possible to remove the individual's interest from the social groups of which he or she is part – or its histories and interests. An individual's interest may be conflicting, resistant or consistent with the group interest. 'Action' refers to the role of human agency in the meaning-making process, which is essentially an action. Acts of choice are decided by the individual's interests, their aptitude for creativity and invention and the limitations and opportunities afforded by the specific context in which the sign-making takes place. These acts can be highly constricted, depending on the cultural, structural and political context in which they are entrenched. Stein (2008: 23) writes that "[e]very sign produced is a representation of the sign-maker's 'interest' and this interest always works at the micro levels of the individual sign-maker within the local context, and at broader macro levels".

As a concept, design is fundamental in social semiotic theory and is listed as Stein's (2008: 23) fourth key concept. Here, design largely overlaps with its discussion under Multiliteracies (refer to Section 2.2), as outlined by the New London Group (1996, 2000) and Cope and Kalantzis (2000), but will be discussed here with reference to Stein's views. As 'designers of meaning', sign-makers or designers, choose appropriate designs, according to his or her interests, from a number of available designs intended for a specific audience and context (Stein, 2008: 22) In addition, the designer's competence in design influences, and can limit, the means in which individuals symbolise meanings. Semiotic resources offer differing potentials for meaning-making, referred to in social semiotics as affordances. These link closely with the design of meaning, as will be discussed below.

2.2.5   Affordances

Affordances is a terms used in social semiotics to describe the different potentials of semiotic resources, or modes, for making meaning, and consequently to investigate how 'knowledge' appears in different modes. The term 'affordance' comes from Gibson (1979), who defines it as the possible uses of a given object, stemming from the discernible properties of the object. Van Leeuwen (in Stein, 2008: 26) explains that perception is subjective, and as a result, different perceivers will note different affordances, dependent on their needs and interests. Affordances that remain unnoticed, "continue to exist objectively, latent in the object, waiting to be discovered" (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 273, in Stein, 2008: 27).

Mode is the result of the social shaping of physical 'materials' which occurs over prolonged intervals of time. Modes consequently need to be considered alongside the social group in which they appear,

as communities have created a set of resources for meaning-making through persistence of their work, interests and predictabilities. In understanding modes, Kress (2011: 247) poses the question, "[w]hat are taken to be modes in this community, in this social group?" instead of only defining and identifying modes. Ethnography plays a role in establishing the context and practices of different communities or social groups.

A mode's differing potential has an influence on the choice of mode(s) in communication occurrences. Sound, for example, has infinite potential for meaning-making, yet social groups only ever use a narrow range of these potentials, by *choosing* certain of the material characteristics of the affordances of sound and excluding others. These are formed over time, in constant semiosic activity and in response to the characteristics of a society and their requirements at the moment of sign-making. The selection of different characteristics differ from society to society. English, for example, only uses 'egressive' sounds[17] in its *speech system* whereas certain African languages, such as the Khoisan language, makes use of 'clicks', which are not found in the English system (Kress, 2010: 143). Kress (2010: 143) writes that this is "not a matter of a different physiology but of social selection and shaping: the disapproving 'tut tut' or 'ts ts' used in English culture is in fact a 'click', but it is not part of the 'phonological' system".

People interact with the world through culturally specific and socially shaped resources in a manner which is founded on their interests. This notion presents a problem in terms of translation, in written or spoken means, as certain cultures may make use of a syntactic or lexical resource which is missing or not as widely used in another (Kress 2010: 149). In the same sense, issues of translation can extend to symbolic signs which are culturally shaped; be they visual, verbal, gestural or other. Kress (2010: 149) writes that the "semiotic reach" of modes – in other words, meaning that is contained by the modes of image or speech or writing or gesture – is particular and restricted in all cultures. Societies also have modal preferences, in which one mode of meaning-making may be preferred over another. What some cultures would do in speech may be communicated in gesture in another. Writing, for example, has been a preferred mode in formal communication in 'Western' societies for a long time. In the same way that modes are socially shaped, the social requirements of a culture or social group can reshape the affordances of a mode in line with what meaning makers need. Social requirements and practices cause modes to continually change. Modal change can then track social change (Kress 2010: 148-149).

The last key concept outlined by Stein (2008: 23) is that of transformative action. A transformative theory of meaning-making differs from traditional views of literacy (as a closed system) in its assertion

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[17] Sounds made by expelling air from the lungs (Kress 2011: 248)

of meaning-making as a fluid activity of redesigning signs as a reaction to other signs. This concept again overlaps with the discussion of Multiliteracies in the following section, but is included separately here with reference to its discussion of the sign. Stein (2008: 23) refers to Iedema (2003), who uses the term 'resemiotisation' to explain how the processes of meaning-making can change between contexts. During this process, the meanings attached to material objects or entities can shift. Resemiotisation is interested in how materiality serves to realise "the social, cultural and historical structures, investments and circumstances of our time (Iedema, 2003, in Stein 2008: 23). Kress (in Stein, 2008: 24) proposes a view of the sign that allows for an exchange from the micro-level of semiotic resources as belonging and connected to wider macro-histories of semiotic systems. He writes that this notion of the sign makes it possible to connect the particularity of semiotic forms, regardless of form, with that of social organisations and histories, "via the actions of social individuals in the production of signs" (Kress, 1993: 177, in Stein, 2008: 24). Here again, social processes are theorised as being at the heart of semiotic systems.

In concluding, Van Leeuwen (2005: 1) reminds us that Social Semiotics is not a "pure theory" and it should not be viewed as a "self-contained field". It is only when applied and interdisciplinary that it attains rightful recognition. Following Michael Halliday, key figures in Social Semiotics, such as Hodge, Kress, van Leeuwen and Stein, have taken his original notion of social semiotics in several directions, further developing notions on meaning-making, semiotic systems, modes and social relations and expanding the general framework far beyond its linguistic origins, to approaching the semiotics of culture (Randviir, 2004).

2.3   MULTILITERACIES AND MULTIMODALITY

In addition to social semiotics, this study uses research from fields influenced by the social semiotic approach, such as multiliteracies and multimodality. Roswell and Walsh (2011: 54), in their article *Rethinking Literacy Education in New Times: Multimodality, Multiliteracies and New Literacies,* write that students increasingly require a repertoire of both print and digital literacy practices to prepare them for their future workplace and life. They write that "[t]erms such as 'new literacies' (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003), 'multiliteracies' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) and 'multimodality' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) have been used for some time to conceptualise the way new communication practices are impacting on literacy and learning". The terminologies 'new' or 'multi' are indicative of the changes that have occurred, with digital communications playing an increasing role in our personal lives and the economy, and the terms also attempt to describe how multiple media texts are now a form of universal communication (Rowsell & Walsh, 2011: 54).

2.3.1   Changing Perspectives of Literacy

The word 'literate' has for most of its history in the English language meant to be 'familiar with literature' or, more generally, 'well educated, learned' and 'knowledgeable or educated in a particular field or fields'. Institutional agendas, national context, academic research, cultural values and personal experiences are some of the factors that shape the idea of what it means to be literate or illiterate (UNESCO, 2006: 147-148).

There are a number of different perspectives on literacy. UNESCO's 2006 EFA Global Monitoring Report, *Education for all: Literacy for life,* presents a number of different views, some of which will be discussed in this section before continuing to a discussion of multiliteracies. The most common understanding of literacy comprises a tangible set of skills – specifically the cognitive skills of reading and writing. These were viewed as independent of the context in which they are acquired and the background of the person who acquired them. Further, the competencies of numeracy are often viewed as being part of literacy or as a supplement to the skills of literacy (UNESCO, 2006: 148).

More recently, the word 'literacy' has been used in a much broader, symbolic sense to refer to other skills and competencies. The meaning of concepts such as 'visual literacy' and 'media literacy' are diverse and shifting. They range from the emphasis on technical skills needed in literacy to the idea that these skills can be applied in critical ways to examine people's environments (for example, the workplace) and encourage social change, or that literacy can be seen as a skill that enables access to knowledge (UNESCO, 2006: 149).

New Literacy Studies (NLS) views literacy from a socio-cultural perspective (Boakye, 2015: 135) – as a skill that is embedded in social settings. Scholars increasingly argue that social and cultural contexts influence the ways in which literacy is practised (UNESCO, 2006: 151). NLS underlines the practices that are present in homes and communities as worthy of consideration in formal educational contexts, rather than simply an individual acquisition of skills (Boakye, 2015: 135). The academic community has seen concepts of literacy evolve from being focused on changes in individuals, to more intricate views which incorporate broader social contexts – the "literate environment" and the "literate society", which "encourage and enable literacy activities and practices to occur" (UNESCO, 2006: 148-149). Consequently, the understanding of literacy has expanded to include using cognitive literacy skills in ways that add to socio-economic development and to develop an aptitude for social awareness and critical reflection as a foundation for both individual and social change (UNESCO, 2006: 147).

In an education paper on post literacy[18], Rogers, Maddox, Millican, Newell Jones, Papen and Robinson-Pant (1999) emphasise that literacy is part of a wider set of 'communicative practices' which embraces oral, written and visual communication. Studies in the socio-cultural approach to literacy have shown that non-literate persons participate in literacy practices in their own communities, just as individuals with developed literacy proficiencies participate in non-literate practices. In short, different everyday contexts pose different literacy demands, views of literacy and types of power relations and hierarchies of knowledge (UNESCO, 2006: 148-149). Terms such as 'collaborative learning', 'communities of practice' and 'distributed learning' have more recently indicated an emphasis on social practices, rather than on the individual mind, in updated considerations of literacy (Rogoff & Lave, 1984; Lave, 1988; Rogoff, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991, in UNESCO, 2006: 151-152).

Arguably the most famous adult literacy educator is Paulo Freire, for whom literacy served a transformative function. Freire saw education as being linked to change and progress at an individual level, requiring personal motivation and commitment to develop (Timpson, 1988: 66). His work integrates concepts of active learning within social-cultural settings. Accordingly, the learner's social-cultural reality was brought into the learning process and its importance emphasised. The learning process was in turn used to challenge social processes (UNESCO, 2006: 152). Hull et al. (2003: 6) suggest that Freire's work teaches us that language and literacy practices are inherently tied to "identity issues, and identity issues of necessity connect to issues of power, indexing one's position in relation to other individuals and groups socially and economically". Freire's philosophies have been used as pedagogical tools to encourage learners who have been "oppressed, excluded or disadvantaged due to gender, ethnicity or social-economic status" (UNESCO, 2006: 152). Timpson (1988: 66) presents a quote by Freire that is indicative of the type of change he saw for literacy practices: "To face our real problems, we will need more artistry and less science, more commitment to change and less attention to maintenance, more process skills and less control, more faith and less efficiency". In concluding, the aforementioned approaches broadly reflect the evolution of the meaning of 'literacy' in different disciplinary traditions.

The word "literacies" in new literacies has signalled a shift in the manner that people make meaning with language by assigning plurality to literacy. Literacies thus move away from the standardised model of literacy education to acknowledge differences based on situations, subjectiveness and multiple text genres, as was discussed in the above section. This plurality marks that there are

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[18]Post literacy or post literacy education is a concept used in continuing education and adult education programmes aimed at recently illiterate or "neo-literate" adults and communities, largely in the developing world.

different literacies that shift with contexts, texts, cultures and the individual identities of the people "using" literacy (Rowsell & Walsh, 2011: 55).

Multiliteracies and Multimodality are both approaches to literacy education and meaning-making that, although overlapping to a large degree, remain distinct in terms of authorship and preoccupations (Newfield, 2008: 1). Multiliteracies proposes that multiple systems of making meaning exist, while Multimodality is important in its use to explain how texts create meaning. The following section will outline Multiliteracies and Multimodality.

2.3.2   Multiliteracies

Multiliteracies is a term coined by the New London Group (1996) in response to what Cope and Kalantzis (2015: 1) call the "emphatic and singular connotations to the word 'literacy'". In addition to this, it had become apparent that traditional literacy pedagogy was not working to achieve its goal of providing social opportunities, as inequalities in education were growing. In a world increasingly shaped by the forces of globalisation and manifest local diversity, modes of making meaning that were strikingly different from each other were juxtaposed and it was obvious that learning to communicate in this new environment required different skills (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015: 1). Multiliteracies' first argument deals with the vast number of communication channels and media; the second addresses the increasing observable nature of cultural and linguistic diversity (Cope & Kalantzis 2000b: 5). In the original article, the New London Group (1996: 65) argues that changes in the world – such as globalisation, an increase in immigration and technological developments – affect the way we live our lives. As a result, "the languages needed to make meaning of our world are radically changing in three realms of our existence: our working lives, our public lives (citizenship) and our private lives (life world)". Consequently, the authors call for a change in the way that literacy has traditionally been taught - which to a large degree has been constrained to the instruction of reading and writing. It also calls for a change of what we consider as literacy.

The term "Multiliteracies" highlights two important and closely related considerations. The first is the growing significance of cultural and linguistic diversity – or the recognition that meaning-making is different and varies according to the cultural, social or domain-specific context in which it occurs (Cope & Kalantzis, 2001). This recognition of differences is increasingly becoming more significant to our communications environment. According to the New London Group (1996: 64),

> Dealing with linguistic and cultural differences hhas become central to the pragmatics of our working, civic and private lives. Effective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively using multiple languages, multiple English and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community and national boundaries.

It has become necessary to understand and negotiate differences on a daily basis. Consequently, literacy teaching can no longer solely focus on the rules of standard forms of a national language. Rather, learners need to be able to differentiate between patterns of meaning occurring in one context or another. These differences can be attributed to a multitude of elements, including gender, culture and subject matter. One can argue that any meaning exchange is cross-cultural to a certain degree (Kalantzis & Cope, 2001). Language diversity becomes an ever more critical issue when considering the globalisation of communications and labour markets (Cope & Kalantzis, 2001).

Cope & Kalantzis (2001) explain that the second major shift contained in the concept of Multiliteracies is the impact that new communications technologies have had. Meaning is made in increasingly multimodal ways. Written, linguistic and alphabetical modes of meaning comprise this meaning-making process, but are incorporated in the broader scope of visual, audio, and spatial patterns of meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2001). Consequently, the reach of literacy education needs to be expanded so as not to favour alphabetical representations, but to bring multimodal representations, particularly those typical of the new, digital media, into the classroom (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012).

As previously mentioned, the rationale for Multiliteracies is discussed by the New London Group (1996) in terms of three domains; namely, (i) changing work lives, (ii)changing public lives and (iii) changing personal lives. These will be briefly discussed in the following section.

Changing work lives

Newfield (2008: 2) writes that in the contemporary context of Post-Fordism[19], hierarchal organisational arrangements are increasingly being replaced by "flattened hierarchies". The contemporary business world emphasises competition and a market centred around change, flexibility, quality and niches – rather than mass production and old capitalism (New London Group 1996: 65). Newfield (2008: 2) states that "[t]his necessitates independent and creative thinking and critique in relation to ever-new goals". Consequently, the type of worker that is necessary for these markets has changed from being an expert with knowledge in a particular field, to being 'multi-skilled'. For educators, this means reconsidering the implications of educational practices such as teaching in relation to a learner's future and a productive working life (New London Group, 2000: 11).

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[19] Post-Fordism (in commerce) refers to the concept that modern industrial production has moved away from mass production in large factories, as pioneered by Henry Ford, towards specialised markets based on small flexible manufacturing units (Collins English Dictionary, 2016).

Changing public lives

Immigration and the spread of cultures and subcultures has created the need for people to broaden their cultural and linguistic inventory in a manner that takes this change into consideration (Newfield 2008: 8, New London Group 1996: 68). Schooling in general, but especially with reference to literacy education, was part of the "old order", in which interventionary states sought to standardise national languages. National standards were imposed over dialectic differences and more recently, immigrants and indigenous people were required to adopt the language of the coloniser (New London Group, 2000: 14, cite Anderson 1983; Dewey 1916/1966; Gellner 1983; Kalantzis & Cope 1993a). Internationally, and especially in the South African context, cultural and linguistic diversity is increasingly becoming a central issue. While literacy education must provide access to languages of power, it has now also had to take into consideration diversity, subcultures and dialectal differences that are presented in contemporary education contexts (New London Group 2000: 14). Newfield (2008: 2) states that "[t]he role of pedagogy here then is to develop an epistemology of pluralism that provides access without people having to erase or leave behind different subjectivities, or to ignore the multiplicity of means of communication".

Changing personal lives

The New London Group (1996: 70) states that we live in an environment in which subcultural differences have become increasingly significant. "Gender, ethnicity, generation and sexual orientation are just a few of the markers of these differences" (New London Group, 2000: 15). Coupled with this is an increase in immigration and relocation, as well as the role of the media. "Private lives are being made public" (New London Group 1996: 70). This statement is backed up by the success of Facebook, Twitter and other social media and sharing sites.

This culture has given rise to a greater difference in life worlds, where individuals no longer belong to only one community or subgroup, but are increasingly part of numerous, divergent life worlds; for example, communities of interests. The boundaries of these groups become increasingly blurred and consequently, as people simultaneously belong to different life worlds, their identities have numerous layers which function in complex relation to one another. People need to develop means in which to negotiate the many life worlds of which they are part, and the many life worlds that they are confronted with on a daily basis. Literacy education needs to address these life worlds (New London Group, 2000: 16-17).

In short, Multiliteracies, as a term, shifts away from privileging written text to acknowledge that literacy is produced in multiple ways. As a concept, it proposes that the representation of language and culture is dynamic and that diversity should be acknowledged in both. Pazuik (2013: i) states that:

"In order to free ourselves from the conventional view of literacy as a simple matter of words, it is important to consider the multiple systems of meaning – or multiliteracies – that we all navigate as functional members of society". A traditional emphasis on alphabetical literacy (letter sounds in words, sentences, texts and in literatures) are increasingly being substituted by Multimodal forms, which have recently become a method that educators can use to engage students within diverse classrooms (Pazuik, 2013: i).

However, the notion of multiple literacies is subject to disagreement. Jones (1997, in Hull et al., 2003: 2) writes that "literacy has become a much debased term, not just because it has attracted a long list of modifiers (computer literacy, media literacy), but also because its core reference to reading has been blurred". Other scholars have questioned why literacy is being used as a metaphor for "everything else" (Hull et al., 2003: 2). One response to this criticism is that reading, viewed in the broadest sense of the word, continues to play an integral role in the notion of literacy. Reading is expanded to include the deciphering of signs, symbols, sounds and pictures – in addition to words – all of which vary from one social context to the next (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000 in UNESCO, 2006: 151).

2.3.2.1 *The 'what' of Multiliteracies: Designs of meaning*

Cope and Kalantzis (2000b: 7) ask the fundamental question: "What do these changes mean for literacy pedagogy?". To answer their question, they (as part of the New London Group) developed the notion of Design as a way to address the 'what' of literacy pedagogy. In the concept of Design, "we are both inheritors of patterns and conventions of meaning, while at the same time active designers of meaning". It follows then that as designers of meaning, we are at the same time designers of social futures in all areas where multiliteracies address change; namely, the workplace, public and community (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000b: 7).

As a term, Design also encompasses an appropriate ambiguity in that it can identify organisational arrangement – or morphology – of products or it can refer to the process of designing. It can already have been designed or it can be in the process of being designed (The New London Group, 2000: 20). The New London Group (2000: 20) proposed that any semiotic text should be treated from within as part of Design. The notion that knowledge and meaning are historically and socially located and produced, serves as the point of departure for the Multiliteracies framework, which consequently considers knowledge and meaning as 'designed' artefacts.

Design, as described above, is a dynamic process, which Kalantzis and Cope (2008: 203) refer to as "a process of subjective self-interest and transformation". The New London Group (2000: 20) delineate Design as involving three main elements – Available Designs, Designing and The Redesigned. These

three elements highlight meaning-making as an active and dynamic process, which does not work according to a set of static rules.

Firstly, Available Resources, or in some texts referred to as 'The Designed' (Kalantzis and Cope, 2008: 203), comprise the accessible meaning-making resources and patterns and conventions of meaning found in a specific cultural context. These include the 'grammars' of different semiotic systems, such as languages, illustration, photography, film or gesture (New London Group, 2000: 20). Available Designs also include 'orders of discourse' (Fairclough, 1995a in New London Group, 2000: 20), which is defined as a particular arrangement of Design elements, or:

> … the structured set of conventions associated with semiotic activity (including use of language) in a given social space – a particular society, or even a particular institution such as a school or a workplace, or more loosely structured spaces of ordinary life encapsulated in the notion of different life worlds (New London Group, 2000: 20).

'Order of discourse', described as the relationship of discourses in a particular context, underscores the tendency for people to draw on systems of sociolinguistic practice and grammatical systems when they design texts. Although not necessarily rigidly structured, some conventional points of positioning always feature in the process of semiosis. The linguistic and discoursal *experience* of people who partake in Designing is also included in Available Designs (The New London Group, 2000: 20). In the moment of Designing, this appears as both a constant and as an extension of particular histories. The New London Group (2000: 20) refers to this as the "inter-textual context" (citing Fairclough, 1989) – which connects the text that is being designed to a series of past texts.

The second element is that of Designing, or "the process of shaping emergent meaning which involves re-presentation and recontextualisation" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008: 203). In any instances where meaning is created, a revision of 'Available Designs of meaning' takes place. As a result, Designing always draws on old materials to make new meaning, rather than being a simple repetition of Available Resources. Designing transforms knowledge by creating new formations and depictions of reality. Through their co-engagement in Designing, people "transform" themselves and their relationship with each other (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008: 203).

Reading, seeing, and listening are, for instance, all occurrences of Designing, and these activities, in turn, transform the resources that have been obtained in the form of Available Designs into The Redesigned (New London Group, 2000: 23). Meaning-making is iterative, with Available Resources constantly being used to create and recreate patterns of meaning.

The outcome of Designing is new meaning, "something through which meaning-makers remake themselves (New London Group, 2000: 23). This is called The Redesigned and is viewed as the way in which people are truly "designers of our social futures" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, in Kalantzis & Cope,

2008: 203). The Redesigned is a novel creation of human agency which is grounded in historically and culturally received patterns of meaning; namely, a transformed meaning. It is a play on both cultural capitals and individually located subjectivity and is never a simple reproduction of Available Resources (New London Group, 2000: 23).

Workplace innovations and school transformations in the contemporary world increasingly acknowledge the significance of Design. Teachers and managers are considered as "designers of learning processes and environments" (The New London Group, 2000: 19). But what exactly is the reach of the Designs of meaning?

Within the growing intricacy and interrelationship of diverse modes of meaning, wherein language is inseparably connected to other modes of meaning, lies one of the most prominent ideas advising the concept of Multiliteracies. Kalantzis and Cope (2008: 203-204) identify chief areas in which "functional grammars" – or metalanguages[20] – which explain and rationalise patterns of meaning, are needed. These include "Linguistic Design, Visual Design, Audio Design, Gestural Design, Spatial Design and Multimodal Design" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008: 204). In these areas, meanings are increasingly interrelated and created in relation to various modes of meaning. This is found especially in the development of new information and communications technologies, where things such as email, desktop publishing, video and multimedia and hypermedia readily overlap (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008: 203-204).

As a means to interpret and create meaning in these new environments, Kalantzis and Cope (2008: 203-204) suggest the following questions be asked. They suggest that the answers be used as a foundation for a functional grammar, "for naming the 'what' of the particular representation of a particular meaning in relation to its 'why'". The proposed questions are listed as:

1.   Representational: What do the meanings refer to?

2.   Social: How do the meanings connect the persons they involve?

3.   Organisational: How do the meanings hang together?

4.   Contextual: How do the meanings fit into the larger world of meaning?

5.   Ideological: Whose interests are the meanings skewed to serve?"

(Kalantzis & Cope, 2008: 203-204).

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[20] Metalanguage is a set of terms or a form of language that is used to describe or analyse another language.

Questions can function as concepts that may be used in any pedagogically useable, contrastive[21] linguistics, and need not be viewed as the grounds for rules on correct usage that students may learn. Students can use these as tools to analyse and motivate why certain Design choices have been made in a specific context. In other words, they are "a heuristic by means of which students can describe and account for Design variations in the world of meaning", with the aim of providing students with an understanding of how meaning is produced in different contexts – especially in the shifting contexts created by new communications and technologies, and intercultural environments in which language is used (Kalantzis & Cope 2008: 203-204).

In concluding this section on multiliteracies, we need to repeat that within this framework, emphasis on alphabetical literacy is increasingly being replaced by what theorists refer to as multimodal forms. Kress (2000: 179–180) states that the rise of modes differing from language in the centre of the domain of public communication has several aspects; "new or newly prominent modes appear and texts and textual objects are more clearly seen to be multimodal – that is, to be constituted by a number of modes of representation". As a result, theories of semiosis have to deal with objects which exist in modes, other than language, and view all text-like objects as multimodal. This raises the very question of whether modes, such as those written of spoken language, can be regarded as 'monomodal' at all (Kress asserts that they cannot). Language itself then, needs to be reconceptualised as a multimodal phenomenon. Multiliteracies relate to multimodality in the sense that different modes can simultaneously be used to create meaning.

2.3.3   Multimodality

Mode, as highlighted in the section on Social Semiotics, can be understood as a socially formed and culturally assumed semiotic resource for making meaning (Kress, 2010: 143). Pippa Stein (2008: 19) states that the term 'multimodality' in literacy education is mainly "associated with social semiotic theory, referred to in the literature as 'multimodal social semiotics', 'multimodal literacy' and 'a multimodal social semiotic approach'". Multimodality proposed that human communication is never produced from only one mode, but is always part of a multimodal ensemble (Stein 2008: 24).

An essential aspect of the new literacies approach in education is the starting point that confirms that not only do that multiple literacies exist, but also that these different literacies require different modes. Meanings are made in ensembles, which draw on and are constituted of different modes. This is apparent in all communication, in all areas of the contemporary social world (Bezemer, et al., 2012:

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[21] Defined as pertaining to the study of the similarities and differences between languages or dialects without reference to their origins (Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary, 2010).

3). Bezemer and Kress (2008, in Hassett & Curwood, 2009: 270) define a mode as a "socially and culturally shaped resource for meaning-making". Rowsell and Walsh (2011: 55) theorise a mode as regularised resources for meaning-making. Image, writing, layout, speech and moving image are examples of modes, which can be brought together or used in isolation to achieve an effect in texts. A multimodal "ensemble" is a text that draws on a range of modes, such as painting, illustration, photography, written language, diagrams and visual design elements (Serafini, 2010: 3). The semiotic properties of a mode refer to its internal structure and to the general ways in which users can make meaning with a mode's signs (Stöckl, 2004: 16).

The 'materiality' of a mode is the manner in which a mode is materialised or given substance, which Kress (1997, in Stein, 2008: 26) refers to as "the stuff". Materiality can take many forms and can be physical – for example, sounds, marks, textures and forms – and it can be perceived through sight, taste, hearing and touch. The notion of multimodalities intrinsically ties to the body, in that bodies produce multimodality "through the manner in which they are constituted sensually and how these senses act on the world and are acted on" (Stein, 2008: 26). The senses, like the meaning-maker, do not act in isolation, which in most cases guarantees our experience of our semiotic world as multimodal. Synaesthetic activity refers to the brain's ability to move across modes and senses; in other words, our brains 'translate' one sense into another – feelings are explained in words, a smell is described in colours and so on (Stein, 2008: 26).

Stöckl (2004: 11) elaborates on the notion of 'grammar', which he explains as signs belonging to one mode that are viewed as being governed by a set of rules that dictate how these signs can be combined to create meaning in a particular situation. However, different material, or medial varieties of one mode, also require a number of associated sub-modes. For example, a linguistic code can be consolidated both by speech and writing. Both these are governed by the grammar of language – but speech, besides being linguistic, also employs modes such as volume, intonation, speed and pausing. Speech is further accompanied by a non-verbal mode – posture, gesture and body language. To summarise this, one can say that modes are able to span sensory channels, and that one mode can be realised in different media – consequently creating medial variants of one mode. Any one of these variants may have a different materiality, which commands individual sets of associated sub-modes to facilitate and accompany the variant (Stöckl, 2004: 11-12).

One last consideration made by Stöckl (2004: 12) is that a range of existing modes represents a "hierarchically structured and networked system, in which any one mode can be seen to fall into sub-modes". He demonstrates this by analysing the image as a major signing mode. Like language, images do not function as purely visual modes, but consist of a tactile quality also – this subsequently is observed in the meaning that we take from them. The materials and techniques used in the

production of a picture is also particular to the sense of touch. The nature of a pictorial sign cannot be evaluated from its visual quality alone, because this also pertains to written language. In this regard, he argues that both image and language are *equally* visual. Due to the intricacy of these considerations, Stöckl (2004: 13) subsequently suggests the following structure of modes:

Core modes encompass central sign inventories that are deeply embedded in people's popular perceptions of codes and communication. These modes can function on their own. Core modes also function as abstract modes, such as language, which need to be represented by a concrete instance in a medial variant – in this case, as either speech or writing.

Peripheral modes appear as unavoidable by-products of core modes. They are intrinsic components of a core mode's specific medial realisation.

Sub-modes provide the building blocks of a mode's grammar and in this way the mode constitutes a mode in itself.

Serafini (2014: 74–45) concentrates on *what* multimodal ensembles do. He states that a principal facet of the "multimodal nature of contemporary visual sites is not simply how discretely sign systems or individual modes articulate and represent meaning potentials, but how meaning is constructed as these sign systems interact with one another" (O'Halloran, 2004). Representing and interpreting multimodal ensembles involve a comprehension of how these socially constructed ensembles are assimilated into cultural life (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, in Serafini, 2014: 74-45). Considering and understanding the sociocultural components of different modes is as necessary as grasping the technological and physical elements of a multimodal ensemble or multimodality. Whereas Multimodality can identify which modes are used, it is unable to identify or tell us what that difference might mean. Consequently, social semiotics is often combined with a theory on meaning; namely, Social Semiotics (Kress, 2010: 22-24). Social semiotics has demonstrated that the selection and use of modes is "guided by socially determined intentions and realises group interests, subjective points of view or ideological stances" (Stöckl, 2004: 10).

According to Gunther Kress and Jeff Bezemer (2008: 171),

> [m]eanings are made in a variety of modes and always with more than one mode. Modes have differing modal resources. Writing, for instance, has syntactic, grammatical and lexical resources, graphic resources such as font type, size, and resources for "framing," such as punctuation.

Furthermore, these effects are read and composed in different ways, compared to linguistic text features. These differences enable modes to function in varying types of semiotic work or to function in similar semiotic work in a variety of ways. "Modes have different affordances – potentials and constraints for making meaning" (Kress & Bezemer, 2008: 171). Understanding this allows for "sign

makers" to do different work which, in "modal ensembles", meets the author's interest and/or the needs of the audience. Stein (2008: 25) refers to this as the different grammar and commutative effects of modes, using gesture as an example. Each gesture communicates a meaning, but the selection of gestures that an individual uses is culturally specific and also changes to suit a specific social occasion or context of use.

The difference between the affordances of writing and image, as a move from narrative to display, is discussed by Kress (1997b: 16-17, in Stein 2008: 27). He notes that the distinction produces distinctly different beliefs and images of the world, as well as different outlooks towards the world by their users. Affordances were discussed in depth under the subheading of Social Semiotics, and thus will not be discussed here.

Kress (2010: 32) touches on the cultural specificity of modes. He argues that more prominent differences between cultures will result in more pronounced differences in modes and their use in practice. This was also discussed under Social Semiotics, where issues of translation were touched on. Kress (2010: 34-35) assumes that translations across modes within a culture are both possible and hugely difficult, regardless whether done in the same mode; for example, from writing to writing. The difficulty can be heightened if translation spans modes, such as a translation from speech to image. This presents certain difficulties in terms of creating picturebooks that a number of cultures, found in the South African context, can use. However, the researcher argues that with careful consideration of cultural symbolism, wordless picturebooks, by their non-prescriptive nature, make this translation easier and accessible on a broader scale than if books were simply translated from one language into another.

2.3.3.1 Multimodality in education, reading and children's books

Stein (2008: 2) writes that:

> This shift from an emphasis on language to mode has far-reaching implications for education. As Kress et al. (2001, 2005) have demonstrated in Science and English classrooms, the idea that each mode provides teachers and students with a range of meaning-making potentials or 'affordances' has consequences for learning, the shaping of knowledge, the development of curriculum and its assessment practices. It has implications for students' identities and how cultures and identities are shaped in learning environments.

Hassett and Curwood (2009: 270-271) write about multimodal education in terms of the theories and practices that make it feasible, even within the confines of standardised education today. The authors note that a transition to multimodal education designates a transformation in the notion of reading as a whole. Possessing traditional print literacy skills continues to be sufficient for many communication tasks, but, in line with the Multiliteracies approach, new ways of decoding and coding image-text relationships are necessary. However, this does not mean that a new kind of reading will

replace an old form, but rather indicates that the practice of reading will always take place "within contexts and social relations...[and] significant differences in those contexts and relations alter the practice" (Burbules, 1998: 102, in Hassett & Curwood, 2009: 270–271).

Print itself is one of the differences in the social context of communication today (Hassett & Curwood, 2009: 270–271). Visual design and synergy with images means that print can take on many different forms. Consequently, when looking at reading instruction within this new context, we need "to realise that written language is being displaced from its hitherto unchallenged central position" (Kress, 1999: 68, in Hassett & Curwood, 2009: 270–271).

As the topic of this research is wordless picturebooks, used in a South African context where the majority of the population have limited access to basic literacy materials – a much less digital material and eBooks (refer to chapters 4 and 5) – the focus of multimodal reading remains in print form. This paper acknowledges that multimodal methods of reading and teaching, which include computers, tablets and smartphones, are valuable contributors towards new literacies. However, the study does not delve into an in-depth investigation of new technologies' use within multimodal texts.

Hassett and Curwood (2009: 270-271) note that language is no longer central to many contemporary children's books, as print is only one mode of communication and not always the most important focus. Reading in classrooms increasingly pays attention to various textual components. The focus is also being extended to include communication that occurs in the social setting of the class; for example, the manner in which learners talk about the picturebook and the conversations that follow its reading. To "read multimodally" becomes a very broad topic, due to the fact that modes for making sense of any text are extremely broad, limited only by what design choices allow. Within the sphere of picturebooks, traditional design elements, such as colour, line, shape or texture, can be considered modes due to their ability to expresses meaning and allow for interpretation by the reader.

Siegel (2006: 65) asserts that although multimodality has been declared a new approach in literacy education, children have been mutlimodal and engaged with texts in multimodal literacy practices. In the late 1970s, there was a proliferation of interest in attempts to understand literacy learning and development in young children. As a result, multimodality gained traction around this time and research shifted attention away from formal instruction. Through a focus on processes and understanding demonstrated by children during storybook reading and dramatic play, notions of literacy before schooling" (Ferreiro & Taberosky, 1982, in Siegel, 2006: 65), later known as "emergent literacy" (Teale & Sulzby, 1986, in Siegel, 2006: 65), surfaced. Emergent literacy is further discussed in Chapter 3 (refer 4.1) in conjunction with joint reading and reading for pleasure.

2.4   A MULTIMODAL SEMIOTIC APPROACH

Thus far, Social Semiotics and Multimodality have been dealt with as two separate, but overlapping frameworks. Kress (2010: 116) writes that Multimodal Social Semiotics posits meaning from three 'perspectives'; namely, *semiosis*, *multimodality* and *specific mode*. The principal perspective is that of *semiosis*, or making meaning, as its categories apply to all representation, communication and media of communication. Multimodality theory deals with issues common to all modes and to the relations between modes. Question such as: 'What kinds of theoretical and actual entities are common to all modes and to all the types of relations between them?' are asked in this perspective. The third perspective is that of dealing with a *specific mode*. The theory here includes categories that describe forms and meanings which are applicable to the distinctions of a particular mode, such as its material affordances, the histories of its social shaping and the cultural origins of elements of that mode (Kress, 2010: 116). Bezemer et al. (2012: 1) identify multimodal social semiotics as a "theoretical perspective that brings all socially organised resources that people use to make meaning into one descriptive and analytical domain". Modes, such as image, lettering, body movement, gaze, speech, posture; and media, for example screens, 3D forms, books, notes and notebooks are a number of resources which could be included in this domain. These can be used in settings designed particularly for learning, which makes a multimodal social semiotic approach an appropriate setting, through which the study of learning can be considered. Bezemer et al. (2012: 13) note that,

> Multimodal social semiotics assumes that power relations are manifest in all forms of recognition; yet rather than establishing an opposing hierarchy of valuation, it sets out to investigate how people use and continue to develop modes of communication in response to social and cultural demands. Thus, a multimodal perspective draws attention to that which is not (yet) 'curricularised'.

Multimodal Social Semiotics deals with entities in which meaning and form appear as an integrated whole – a sign. Signs are continually reinterpreted or newly made according to fit the interests of sign-makers and, as noted in the above quote, according to social and cultural demands. Further, the meaning-making process is intrinsically grounded within the context in which semiosis occurs (Kress 2010: 116-117). It therefore provides a suitable framework for the analysis of wordless picturebooks in parent-child reading activities in the South African context – and more specifically in participant homes, as it allows for contextual factors to be taken into consideration.

2.5   CONCLUSION

Bezemer et al. (2012: 13) note that one of the fundamental shifts in designs for learning has been the shift between image and writing. Visuals no longer serve to simply illustrate words, but are integrated into multimodal ensembles and are used fully in representation. They note that this change is revealing of a need to "make curriculum knowledge 'relevant' through a connection with students' out-of-school experience; the desire to increase student 'engagement' through 'interactivity'" (Bezemer et al., 2012: 13). These changes also have an impact on the manner in which students approach languages, in that they can now be connected with experiences and technologies that occur outside the school space. In South Africa, where there is a disparity in language of instruction and language spoken at home, multimodal sources can facilitate a classroom that can become a democratic space based on the integration of many languages, discourse and modes of representation found in various cultures (Stein, 2008: 152). Although the classroom and education are not the focus of the primary research, they form part of the context of the study that many children face on a daily basis and participant children will face in a few years. The introduction of wordless picturebooks, which allows for different languages in reading and meaning-making, as well as for readers to construct their own meaning from the pictures, may facilitate this type of multimodal learning at a preschool age, before children are confronted with it at school. It could serve an important role in terms of school readiness, especially in low socio-economic areas where many parents/primary caregivers may be illiterate or have a low level of literacy. The characteristics of wordless picturebooks that make it suitable to be considered as a multimodal source are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: WORDLESS PICTUREBOOKS

3.1   INTROCUCTION

Barbara Kiefer (2013: 20), Associate Professor at the Department of Curriculum and Teaching at Columbia University, writes that over the last four decades, scholarly research into the field of picturebooks has not only defined the picturebook as a cultural item, but has additionally explored how it works to engender an aesthetic experience to the reader. In a general sense, a picturebook is a book in which the illustrations play an integral role in telling the story (Backes, 2009). Barbara Bader (1976: 1) writes: "[a] picture book is text, illustration, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and, foremost, an experience for a child". Within this wide-ranging definition, several types of books, including the wordless picturebook, are found.

Bader's definition of the picturebook emphasises the child audience of the genre, and also brings our attention to the social, cultural and technological factors that influence the audience and format of picturebooks throughout the twentieth century. At a time when most reviews of picturebooks were focused on the text (words), Bader conceptualised picturebooks as 'art objects', in which words and images work together to generate a response as the reader navigates the pages. Kenneth Marantz (1983: 151, in Kiefer, 2013: 20) insisted that "picturebooks are not literature – that is, word dominated things – but rather a form of visual art. The picturebook must be experienced as a visual/verbal entity if its potential values are to be realised" (Kiefer, 2013: 20-21).

In the introduction to their book, *Visual Journeys Through Wordless Narratives: An International Inquiry with Immigrant Children and The Arrival*, authors Evelyn Arizpe, Teresa Colomer and Carmen Martínez-Roldán (2014: 3) sum up the present state in which picturebooks are viewed in research:

> Picturebooks (with and without words) have been the subject of literary research by seminal authors such as Bader (1976), Nodelman (1988), Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) and D. Lewis (2001), who have refined our understanding of what picturebooks are and how they work as a multimodal genre where the playful but often complex interaction between the words and the images has the potential to generate tiers of meaning as readers are invited to attend to and move between the response-inviting structures.

An increasing number of researchers have provided a greater understanding of picturebooks. However, for many years, illustrations were treated as craftsmanship rather than fine art, and the picturebook was treated as being "childish" (Kiefer, 2013: 21). According to Colomer, Kümmerling-Meibauer and Silva-Díaz (2010: 1), more recently picturebooks have received more enthusiastic

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critical attention than ever before. Intensive experimentation with the interplay of text and image has led to a considerable development in the artistic effects of picturebooks. As a result, the medium has become a popular topic for researchers, not only for language acquisition and educational tools, as was the case in the 1980s, but as a "subtle and complex art form that can communicate on many levels and leave a deep imprint on a child's consciousness" (Colomer et al., 2010: 1).

This chapter investigates wordless picturebooks as a distinct genre and will also briefly discuss how wordless picturebooks function from a social semiotics perspective, as it is necessary to contextualise how narratives that rely solely on pictures function. The demands that the genre make on the reader will be outlined, and as a means to understand how people have reacted to reading wordless picturebooks, reader response studies will be discussed in concluding this section.

3.2   A DISTINCT GENRE

Wordless picturebooks have become a well-defined category within children's literature over the course of the last forty to fifty years (Crawford & Hade, 2000: 66). When considering pre-literate history, it is evident that the genre's origins extend well into the past. Stewig (in Dowhower, 1997: 61) claims that the manifestation of wordless picturebooks is a precursor of early forms of communication used by our ancestors to describe and remember events such as hunts, military invasions and religious stories. Media used to represent these happenings extend from cave paintings to stained glass windows.

In their book, *How Picturebooks Work*, Maria Nikolajeva and Carol Scott (2001: 8) explore the "two extremes in the word-picture dynamic", which they describe as the verbal and visual sides of the spectrum. On the extreme verbal side is a narrative or non-narrative text. A verbal narrative can become an illustrated story with the addition of one or several pictures. The illustrations, however, remain subordinate to the text at all times – despite the fact that different illustrations may impart different interpretations of a story. In an illustrated story, the narrative as such remains relatively consistent, and can be still be read without the pictures.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, the extreme visual side would consist solely of a picture narrative or an exhibit book (picture dictionary). Nikolajeva and Scott (2001: 9) refer to "pictures without words", and note that these present several levels of difficulty for a reader. In the first instance, an exhibit book (or picture dictionary) presents few problems, and in their opinion it is the only category in which a "total correspondence of verbal and visual" text is possible. With the exception of particular cases, exhibit books generally follow a convention where the iconic sign (for

example, a picture of a table or a chair) is directly connected to the conventional (or symbolic) sign (the word "table" or "chair").

A wordless picture narrative, in contrast to picture dictionaries, is a complicated form, as it requires that the reader verbalise the story (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001: 9). This genre of book in particular elevates the nature of meaning-making, due to their prioritisation of reading images, which consequently increases the need for the reader's involvement (Arizpe et al., 2014: 4). A wordless picturebook, according to Hillman (1995, in Jalongo, Dragich, Conrad & Zhang, 2002: 167) is a "pure picturebook," which tells a story entirely, or almost entirely, through pictures. This genre offers surprising varieties, not only in topics and themes, but also in levels of difficulty, and it extends to books with minimal text. Jalongo et al. (2002: 167) write that "almost" wordless picturebooks are included in this category, as they use very minimal text[22].

Dowhower (1997: 60), Rowe (1997: 221) and Beckett (2012: 121) have debated the true definition of "wordless picturebooks", arguing that not all books devoid of words contain stories in the usual sense (Dowhower, 1997: 60), or that the use of the compound word 'picturebook' by scholars in children's literature indicates the correlation of word and image that differentiates such texts, contrasted with the use of 'picture books', which indicate a lack of narrative (Arizpe, 2013: 5). For the purposes of this study, 'picturebook' will be used to indicate the inherent narrative in the books discussed, and wordless picturebooks will be defined in the same manner that Evelyn Arizpe (2013: 5) recognises them; namely, as a "text where the visual image carries the weight of the meaning". This definition implies that the lack of text is "not a simple feat of artistry", but is instead appropriate to the substance of the book (Nières-Chevre, 2010: 137).

Evelyn Arizpe (2013: 168) introduces the wordless picturebooks as an established genre, noting that authors such as Richley and Puckett (1992), Dowhower (1997), Bosch (2011) and Beckett (2014) have all noted the proliferation of wordless picturebooks since the 1960s. The genre is also well recognised among publishers, with Arizpe (2013: 167) arguing that not only does there exist a market for creating and publishing these types of books, but there is also an active reader following of the genre. The Caldecott Medal[23] has been awarded to seven picturebooks since 1990[24].

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[22] The author refers to books which make use of one word, books which make use of labels or make use of a sound words.
[23] The Caldecott Medal is the highest accolade for American picture books, and is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children (ALSC 2016).
[24] Award winners have included: *Tuesday* by David Wiesner (1991); *Yo! Yes?* by Chris Rashka (1993); *No, David!* by David Shannon (1998); *The Red Book* by Barbara Lehman (2004); *Flotsam* by David Wiesner (2006); *The Lion and the Mouse* by Jerry Pinkney (2010) and, most recently, *A Ball for Daisy* by Chris Rashka (2012). Other notable illustrators that have worked in the genre include Raymond Briggs, Mitsumasa Anno, Shirley Hughes, Quentin Blake, Tord Nygren, Istvan Banyai, Juan Gedovius, Shaun Tan, Suzy Lee and Bill Thomson (Arizpe 2013: 167)

Described by Kiefer (1994: 6) as "a unique art object, a combination of image and idea that allows the readers to come away with more than the sum of the parts", wordless picturebooks are a medium that allow for a self-directed dialogue to exist between reader and book. Subsequently, they have developed as distinctive genre within literature, for both children and adults (Degler, 1979; Lindauer, 1988; Stewig, 1988, in Kiefer, 1994: 6).

Crossover Picturebooks, Sandra Beckett's (2012) sequel to her earlier publication *Crossover Fiction* (2009), seeks to address what Beckett feels is "the neglect of a genre that deserves special attention within the widespread and ever expanding global trend of crossover literature". Beckett (2012; 84,99, in Arizpe, 2013: 167) believes that the popularity of the wordless picturebook genre is due to their flexibility and attractiveness to a varied audience, ranging from beginner to more advanced readers. She further underlines that they are considered as books for the digital age due to their "interactive' and 'cinematic' qualities". The wordless picturebook, although not a new genre, is one with which illustrators and authors are increasingly experimenting.

3.3   A HISTORY OF WORDLESS PICTUREBOOKS

Beckett (2012: 107) notes that wordless picturebooks have become a publishing trend in certain countries, with a new generation of artists exploring wordless story telling. Its recent appeal, however, comes long after the genre was introduced.

The scope of this study does not allow for a full account of the history of the genre; suffice to say that antecedents to the genre include "novels without words" or "pictorial narratives" that were presented as black and white books and dealt with the social issues of the time (Beronä, 1999: 90). Lynn Ward's *God's man* (1929) and Milt Gross' *Hearts of Gold: the Great American Novel and not a Word in it – No Music Too* (1930) were among the early classic silent novels of the 1920s and 1930s (Dowhower, 1997: 62). An earlier example of the genre was published by a French publishing house, Nathan, in 1902, and was entitled *Trente Histoires en Images Sans Paroles a Racounter par les Petits* (Thirty stories in images without words for children to tell) (Beckett, 2012: 106).

Isabelle Nières-Chevrel (2010: 129), in *The Narrative Power of Pictures,* states that the first narrative picturebooks devoid of text appeared in France (coming from Italy) in the 1970s. Whereas the aim of the [wordless] "baby concept" books form in the 1930s was listening, these new narrative books were focused on "telling" – creating a link between pictures, building a sequential order and interpreting the different steps of a story. Readability in these books was assured by a unity of space, frame and point of view, and further assisted by the small number of elements that could vary. A chronological

order of events materialises as the reader turns the pages – reading from right to left, and interpreting illustrations as they correspond to the reading order. These books were void of "flashbacks" or breaks in the narrative, but rather presented the story in a linear manner, with very little variation in rhythm or duration (Nières-Chevrel, 2010: 129).

Thomas Bewick's *A New Year's Gift: For Little Masters and Misses*, which was first published in 1777, is considered by Dowhower (1997: 62) as one of the earliest English wordless picturebooks produced for children. *What Whiskers Did*, by Ruth Carroll, published in 1932, was arguably the first American wordless picturebook aimed at a young audience. The book was considered a novel step in the development of wordless narratives for an emerging pre-school audience, through its use of only sparse symbolic devices, such as a question mark, to create a story (Bader,1976: 540, in Le Roux, 2012). Bader (1976: 540, in Le Roux, 2012) starts her discussion of wordless books as a genre by referring to Helen Sewell's picturebook, *A Head for Happy* (1931). This illustrated work contains words in a very limited form, with narrative carried principally by the visual sequence of illustrations that tells the story of three young girls' adventures while trying to find a head for their stuffed doll. In Bader's opinion, the use of words serves only to punctuate the storyline and indicate emotion, rather than being fundamental to the story. Hans Augusto Rey's *Zebrology* (1937) also appeared as an early form of the genre, where only the title is in the form of words.

Beckett (2012, 2016) notes that most wordless picturebooks released prior to 1970 leant heavily on a pedagogical purpose, being presented as educational books. The phrase "from pedagogical material to graphic narration" came about in France around 1970, when wordless picturebooks arrived in the country from Italy. Unlike the "baby concept" books from earlier years, the point of these books was to encourage [story] telling, rather than simply labelling objects in the illustration (Bader, 2012: 106). These books generally presented a sequence of images that were intended to introduce children to a narrative by allowing them to formulate their own interpretation of what had happened in a series of pictures. Eric Carle's *Do You Want To Be My Friend?* (1971) marks the significance on understanding and interpreting images as a means to prepare young readers for decoding, and the book claims to be a "first step to reading" for young children (Houp, 2003: 4).

David Beronä (1999: 90) believes that the early twentieth century's enthusiastic reception of comic strips and silent cinema were additional factors that proved fundamental to the public's fixation on pictorial images. The pictures in wordless novels captured the essential frames of a silent movie and carried the total weight of the narrative. He further states that "...the dynamic period of artistic experimentation in Europe that followed World War I, when artists created works that were the antithesis of everything ordinary and natural, was a suitable time for the arrival of books without words" (Beronä, in Houp, 2003: 1). Pictures were subsequently considered as having the ability to

covey a story without the use of text. However, they demanded an increased narrative involvement by readers and gave rise to the imaginative and creative capacity that Scott McCloud (1993: 88, in Beronä, 1999: 90) finds so "strange and wonderful that happens in this blank ribbon of paper" between panels, or pictures in comics.

Wordless picturebooks, however, have fallen prey to the misconception that they cannot, and should not, be of serious literary value. The genre has predominantly been referred to as books that create a basic narrative that tells a story though pictures. Despite the truth in this statement, many of the books classified in the genre do not communicate stories in a usual sense. One needs only to look at the variety of books available within the genre to support the diversity that the medium has to offer – from a series of completely unrelated images to illustrations that are linked by subject matter or expository information (Dowhower, 1997: 60). Nikolajeva and Scott (2001: 9, 21) highlight the complexity of the format by pointing out that many wordless picturebooks are not designed strictly for small children, but they cater for an adult audience as well. The visual complexity and high inference levels of many wordless picturebooks, however, make them more suitable for an adolescent or adult audience than for young children only. Dowhower (1997: 61) provides examples such as *Flood* (Drooker, 1992) and *The Read Thread* (Nygren, 1987) to demonstrate this, and help wordless books discard their classification as serving solely an educational function.

The study of picturebooks is now a well-established area, with key works by writers such as Perry Nodelman (1988), Jane Doonan (1993), David Lewis (2001), Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott (2001), Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles (2003) and Lawrence Sipe and Sylvia Pantaleo (2008) exploring their various qualities and types. Furthermore, the first comprehensive guide to wordless (and nearly wordless) picturebooks was released in 2015. *Wonderfully Wordless: The 500 Most Recommended Graphic Novels and Picture Books* by William Patrick Martin (2015) is a resource for those "who recognise the value of these exceptional books in working with different types of students, particularly preschool, English as a Second Language (ESL), and special needs and creative writers".

3.4   WORDLESS PICTUREBOOKS AS MULTIMODAL RESOURCES: AFFORDANCES AND READER EXPERIENCE

Wordless picturebooks are part of multimodal forms of communication, where, as Stein (2008: 24, referring to Iedema, 2003: 33) states: "Language is decentred as well as the traditional boundaries between language, image, page layout and document design [blurred]". Arizpe et al. (2015:34) write that:

> Wordless narratives serve as prime examples of such multimodality in that they prioritize the reading of images through a process of visual literacy; in other words, they magnify the invitation to readers to consider visual elements such as colour, shading, panel layout and perspective as well as the usual literacy elements of character, setting and plot.

Arizpe et al. (2015: 34) mention the fact that parents and teachers often still consider wordless picturebooks as material for the pre-literate child and "express concerns about how to 'read' them with their children". The question whether their children will 'gain' anything from this genre is also often repeated. In contrast, many educators and researchers have long been using them to develop language and other skills (Arizpe, 2013a, in Arizpe et al., 2015: 34).

In this section, the researcher will first discuss some of the theories that help understand how wordless picturebooks function and the affordances of this particular medium. In addition, the expectation of the readers is explored in terms of what these books require in order to 'be read'. However, it is important to very briefly emphasise here that this study focuses on wordless books that present the reader with a narrative, as much of the discussion will centre on how meaning is made by readers to produce a narrative or story. Beckett (2012: 106) writes that wordless picturebooks present sequences of images intended to introduce children to narrative by inviting them to formulate what is happening in a series of events. This study makes the assumption that wordless picture books, by their very nature, have narrative qualities, and will be interpreted by the reader as such. Artists' books, or other books where content is not sequenced to form narrative, are not considered in this discussion.

Picturebooks also have a set of affordances which readers can use to create meaning. Martinez, Roser, Zapata and Greeter (2016: 226) write that within the picture book genre, its visual components and congruency[25] (Schwarcz, 1982: 15) between visuals and verbal text are most often associated with the distinctiveness of the genre. Illustrations in picturebooks are essential in making sense of the narrative, and consequently, rather than using congruency to describe the relationship between image and text in picturebooks, Sipe (2008, in Martinez et al., 2016: 226) contends that text and illustration in this genre relate synergistically – each adding to a whole that is more complex than the effect its parts on their own.

Young readers and children learning a second language generally attend more closely to the illustrations than the printed text in picturebooks, viewing the illustrations as both attractive and informing (Martínez, Roldán & Newcomer, 2011, in Martinez et al., 2016: 226). Illustration in thoughtfully constructed picturebooks which represent authentic cultural experiences of children,

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[25] Congruency is a term used by Schwarcz (1982: 15) to explain the relationship between text and image, which he conceives as two distinct categories. In the congruency category, text and image are in a harmonious relationship, as opposed to the category of deviation, in which the illustration veers away from the text by opposing it in some form (Sipe, 1998: 98).

serve not only to support learning, but help to move the child reader through the story world (Martinez et al., 2016: 226). A multimodal social semiotic approach to wordless picturebooks would focus on understanding how the modes within a multimodal ensemble work together to create a whole. Further, it acknowledges that texts consist of a number of representational resources, which are socially situated and need to be considered with regard to their specific social, historical and cultural context. The semiotic properties of a mode refer to its internal structure and to the general ways in which users can make meaning with a mode's signs (Stöckl, 2004: 16).

Wordless picturebooks are located in all three media families and can therefore be identified as being multimodal. They are visual and comprised of pictures (images) that can be interpreted by a reader in a way that brings historic, cultural and social context to the fore. Perry Nodelman (1988: 186) argues that "children tend to express their enjoyment of wordless books by telling, in words, the stories the pictures suggest to them; they themselves turn purely visual experiences into verbal ones". This statement suggests that wordless picturebooks also make use of the verbal and aural media forms in creating a narrative text (Le Roux, 2012: 12). As multimodal texts, wordless picturebooks are made up of images, writing (words as images or paratextual elements), colour, facial expressions of the characters and gesture, to name a few. Nodelman's statement can further be linked to Stöckl's (2004: 11-12) suggestion of modes crossing sensory channels. The lack of words in this genre and the reader's need to verbalise the narrative that they decode, suggest that the illustrations function as a both a core and abstract mode (Stöckl, 2004: 12). In other words, the illustrations are interpreted with the central sign inventories of a person, whereas the fact that the reader verbalises the narrative indicates that the narrative contained by the illustrations requires an additional form of representation in order to be realised. The mode of speech and the mode of narrative which are created by the reader can also be seen as by-products of the wordless picturebook – and as an unavoidable by-product of the illustrations.

The "naming" of elements in a visual image is seen by Serafini and Ladd (2008, in Serafini, 2010: 95-96) as a rudimentary type of interpretive action. He states that "[t]o simply name or give language to an aspect of a visual image is an act of transduction – a shift from one mode (image) to another (language)". Every act of conversion, regardless of how literal and straightforward it is, remains a form of interpretation. Visual cues available in multimodal texts can be understood in a number of ways by referring to the grammars that are characteristic in both images and design elements – which are capable of doing so because the creator (in this case the illustrator) has intended for some meaning to be made. Different semiotic resources are chosen as a means to meet the requirements of the meaning-maker. These can be used deliberately or unintentionally, without the meaning-maker being explicitly aware of how the choices influence meaning (Kress, 2010, in Serafini, 2010: 96). Beckett

(2012: 106) writes that wordless picturebooks present sequences of images intended to introduce children to narrative by inviting them to formulate what is happening in a series of events. The act of 'storying' images can be viewed as a conversion.

The illustrations additionally consist of a number of sub-modes (Stöckl, 2004: 11-12) in the form of colour – a very powerful mode of communication – use of space and perspective, the quality of the paper it is printed on, and so on. Kress (2010: 113) notes that social semiotics is able to say something about the function of each mode within a text. Modes should be considered in how they relate to each other, as well as the main entities in the text.

Colour is a mode that is written extensively about in the analysis of picturebooks. *The Rainbow Birds* (2001) by South African illustrator Piet Grobler provides "wordless double page spreads of a progression from a sad, colourless Africa, with birds visible in a cage, through the addition of one colour bird at a time and eventually to a glorious seven-colour rainbow sunshine" (Vorster, 2014: 128). The book illustrates children and animals chasing the rainbow birds across various landscapes (Figure 3.1), from towns to farms, forests and beaches. Colour as a mode, or semiotic resource, is multifunctional in its use in the culturally located making of signs (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002: 343). Performing an ideological function, colour can be used to represent people, places and things. It can further be a means to show *categories* of people, places and things or more general ideas (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002: 347). Kress and Van Leeuwen, (2001, in Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002: 355) argue that colour as a signifier carries a set of affordances, from which sign-makers and interpreters make a selection according to their communicative needs and interests in a given context. Resources, such as colour, can act as stimuli from which people can make meaning and interpret a text; through socio-cultural uses and connotations, metaphorical associations and relationships. Serafini (2010: 96) writes that:

> [U]nderstanding the relationships among various visual structures or grammars and the meanings associated with them in a given culture is an important aspect of the structural analytical perspective. Readers of multimodal texts need to develop a metalanguage for noticing, discussing and interpreting visual images if they are going to move beyond the literal perception of images and multimodal texts.

One can argue that the rainbow colours used in *The Rainbow Birds* refer to a specific important cultural concept within South Africa, the Rainbow Nation, or to what Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1993, in Vorster, 2014: 128) calls "the rainbow children of God". It is only when all the colours of the rainbow have filled the page that we see the children being happy (here the facial expressions and gestures are also modes) – dancing and celebrating – which can additionally be interpreted as a symbolic reference to South Africa's emergence as a democracy, after the years of Apartheid.

Gérard Genette (1997: 1), in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, writes that texts do not often appear in an "unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as the author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations". Although not necessarily intended to belong to the text, these productions extend and surround it in order to present it, or as Genette (1997: 1) argues, "to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption in the form … of a book". He labels these accompanying productions as paratexts[26]. Harris (2005: 2, 5) elaborates, noting that paratexts can be important in mediating the relationship between the reader and the text. Picturebooks can make use of detailed relationships between title pages, book covers, layout and end papers, for example, and readers are required to decipher these also, as a means to create meaning.

Suzy Lee, an internationally acclaimed artist and illustrator of children's books, including *Wave* (2008) and *Shadows* (2010) writes that: "Sometimes, the motivation for creating a book can come from the conditions of the book's structural form and not only from literary subjects" (Lee, 2015). Whereas *Wave* made use of a panoramic trim size, which allows for the pages to convey the sheer enormity of the ocean effectively, *Shadows* (Figure 3.2) is a book that opens from bottom to top. Lee (2015) uses the centre binding of each of the book's left and right pages works as a "border between fantasy and reality" – in *Shadows* representing "a play made by the child alone – the child's creations coming alive…" (Lee, 2015).

Lee (2015) notes how these paratextual elements are used by readers, concluding that "all methods of reading are possible because it's a book". Some readers noted that by placing the book at 90 degrees, the shadows look more convincing, as if they are cast on the floor. Rotating the book also made it possible for readers to choose the part of the story that they wanted to see first – the shadow (fantasy) or the child (reality). It is interesting to note that although both *Wave* and *Shadows* are printed the same size, the paratextual elements help to create an entirely different physical reading experience of both books – the very experience of reading; for example, handling the book, deciding where to start and at which angle to view the illustrations. Lee (2015) ends with: "The readers always tell me their own method of reading books. And I think that's the charm of wordless picturebooks".

More often than not, picturebook do contain a title, which is usually found on the front cover, spine and back cover. Bosch (2014: 88) writes that it is customary to recognise the title as peritext – images

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[26] This paper refers to both *paratext* and *peritexts* as a concept in literary interpretation referring to the other materials supplied by editors, printers, and publishers, that often surround the main text of published authors/illustrators. To maintain the integrity of sources, the study refers to *paratext* and *peritexts* as used by the cited author, rather than to indicate a difference in meaning.

and/or textual elements that act as secondary to the main body of a published work. Genette (1997: 26, 32) refers to the publisher's peritext, which, in the case of wordless picturebooks, would include the ISBN, magnetic barcode and copyright information. It can be postulated that the title is the most important element in the peritext, as it is the most closely link with the illustrations that form the text (Beckett, 2012, in Bosch, 2014: 88). The title also provides context for the picturebook (Nodelman, 1988: 103). Gemme Lluch (in Bosch, 2014: 89) argues that "[c]hildren's literature mainly uses titles based on the subject matter or the main character in the book, which give a key as to how to interpret the text; as to what focus to give the reading". These titles are mostly used with wordless picturebooks. *Abongi's Journey* (2004) (Figure 3.3), a South African wordless picturebook used in the primary research for this study, uses both the main character and subject matter in its title, clearly indicating to the reader that little boy in the story, who can now be identified as having the name "Abongi", is embarking on a journey that spans the pages of the book. This information can influence the interpretation that a reader makes.

Bosch (2014: 90) writes that the title …

> … conditions the reader's expectation. Those few words are in a partnership contract with the reader. Without changing any of the content, a title can, for example, transform a documentary picturebook into an activity book. If *Anno's Journey* (Anno, 1977) were entitled *Where's Anno?*, the reader would have a different attitude towards the images and could certainly be more interested in finding the horse-rider than anything else.

Harris (2005: 6-7) is of the opinion that, although some of the meaning of the paratextual elements may be lost on the reader until the story has been read, the importance of returning to a book's paratext in order to reflect on different layers of meaning and how interpretations are shaped should be emphasised. Arizpe et al. (2015: 32) note that, even when overlooking the publisher's information, all picturebooks contain a few words which may also appear entrenched in the pictures themselves, for example a street or shop name. In *Abongi's Journey* (2004), this appears as the logo of a popular mobile telephone network operator (MTN) (Figure 3.4). These elements can be very important in the interpretation of the text, providing contextual clues as to the setting, as in the example of *Abongi's Journey*. The use of the MTN sign provides a specific cultural reference to the reader, which might not be understood by, for example, an European audience, where the logo would not be a visible part of where the readers reside.

From a social semiotic perspective, paratextual elements, such as the blurb, addresses a reader who is not (or most likely not) the child reader, but rather an adult reader who purchases books on behalf of the child. These purchases are made according to notions of what is good for child readers and what child readers like to read, and are generally guided by professional or institutionalised advice. Extracts from reviews included in children's books lend authority to reviewers. The cultural

determinations of narrative can be observed as functioning in the semiosis (meaning-making) of the picture book genre. As a distinct industry, publishing is "involved in (re)producing culturally acceptable versions of society for those who are to be acculturated[27]" and is reinforced by industries, disciplines and professions of education, literary criticism and psychology (Hodge & Kress, 1988: 238).

It is useful to note here that the above example also serves to highlight the importance of context, as social semiotics emphasise the social creation of meaning. Context, when considering wordless picturebooks, plays a role in that the designer of meaning – namely, the illustrator/author – will not necessarily be present in the semiotic exchange. When removed from the context in which the book was created, the reader's context may, or may not, influence how the signs are interpreted. This is discussed in more depth under the South African reading landscape – where the importance of local content is emphasised.

Child readers, according to Hodge and Kress (1988: 238) will respond to the 'unspeakable' meanings contained in a visual text in ways that respond to their previous experience as social beings in certain categories and of their working out. In picturebooks, there occurs an intermingling, juxtaposition, challenging and modalisation between the visual and verbal in particular ways, and they serve as structures that are meant to be read. It is important, however, to note that they do not determine the child reader's reading of a text. From the moment children are born, they are conditioned by the effects of semiosis and culture. The new born, despite often being considered a *tabula rasa*[28] by philosophers such as John Lock, is born into a semiotic affiliationwith other people. Throughout their lives, they create a world of meaning, and they themselves are in turn constructed by an already semiotised world. The child reader, even if being read to by an adult, is located in a complex set of social relations, and already has a social and cultural history (Hodge & Kress, 1988: 238, 240).

The influence of culture, the social shaping of meaning and the manner in which children can challenge meaning through readings of a wordless picturebook are demonstrated by Mourao's 2015 shared books reading of *Loup Noir*, a wordless picturebook by French illustrator Antoine Guilloppé. The book deliberately challenges the stereotyped view that "wolves are bad" (Mourao, 2015: 182). Reading the book with three groups of children, Mourao (2015: 182) described how during their talk about the book and reflection on the illustrations, children's perception of the wolf as being "bad" gradually shifted to a view of the wolf being good. In all their references, the children's cultural framework was "fractured" in their reinterpretation of the wolf. Only one group in the study could not consolidate their subconscious, socially constructed idea of a wolf as being bad to that of the wolf as being good,

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[27]Acculturated is defined as being assimilated to a different culture, typically the dominant one (Merriam Webster, 2016).
[28]The theory that at birth the (human) mind is a "blank slate" (Merriam Webster, 2016).

and consequently changed the character to a bear. This group is an example of just how deep-seated cultural beliefs can be, as well as how these beliefs are often grounded in the tales that are told to younger children. Jesse (2000: 30) notes: "that wolves have been consistently and lastingly singled out as villains and plunderers in the literature is clear". Her investigation into the demonising of wolves in western literature noted that "the concerns of society dictated how wolves were represented in the literature with the general outcome that wolves are portrayed as a force against human goals". The roots of the fear and hate of the wolves started as a concern for the security of domestic animals in farming communities, "but the full explanation lies deeper in man's psychology" (Jesse, 2000: 30). Viewed from a social semiotic, the social shaping of the sign by cultures and communities over time.

It is increasingly accepted that a variety ways to respond to picturebooks exists. It is only in the last decade or so, however, that some picturebooks have been acknowledged as intricate, multimodal texts, which make intellectual demands on the reader. Picturebooks have the capacity to be very powerful texts that can inspire emotion and formerly untapped thoughts, allowing the reader to reflect on life and its 'vagaries' (Evans, 2013: 104).

Semiotic resources used in the creation of multimodal texts differ from those used to construct printed texts. They inherently present different possibilities for making meaning than those used for linguistic texts. The shift to a multimodal focus thus necessitates that the readers navigate, design, interpret and analyse texts in new, collaborative ways (Unsworth, 2002 ; Anstey & Bull, 2006, in Serafini, 2010: 86). Crawford and Hade (2000: 66) also note the uniqueness of the medium "in that its content must be communicated solely through the use of illustrations. These images must be able to stand alone, without the support of a printed text, and must carry the full weight of the illustrator's intentions".

The fact that content needs to be communicated solely through images also has certain implications when considering the modality of wordless picturebooks. With reference to modality in picturebooks, here discussed with reference to picturebooks that do contain words, authors such as John Stevens and Jane Doonan have used Kress and Van Leeuwen's theories in the analysis on picturebooks. Western picturebook art generally resists non-representational[29] abstraction. John Stevens argues that the base modality of picturebooks always involves some degree of abstraction (Mietznet, Myers & Peim, 2005: 72). Mietznet et al. (2005: 72) argue that children learn this to be the norm. Consequently, this 'abstract' modality is expected from story books, whereas images with a high modality – such as a photograph – are generally associated with educational, "learning" books.

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[29] Nonrepresentational art refers to compositions which do not rely on representation or mimesis to any extent (The Free Dictionary, 2016).

However, not all authors feel that this theory is entirely effective. Nikolajeva and Scott (2001: 174) believe that drawing the term modality from its linguistic context provides a complex range of subjective expressions, but the approach developed by Van Leeuwen and Kress depends on an over-simplistic spectrum in which a photograph has a higher degree of modality than an abstract or surrealist work of art. For example, an illustration of a mythical creature would immediately be perceived as having low modality – namely, as being unreal. Furthermore, the language of picture books, in the cases where illustrations are paired with text, is often linked back grammatically to "factual" accounts about events, actions, processes or states. These verbal texts often seem more enlightening and factual than they actually are (Stephens, 2000: 46). Stephens (2000: 47-48) explains that narrative text has a higher modality than the accompanying pictures.

Due to the nature of the wordless picturebooks and their need to engage with the viewer using only illustrations, one could argue that they predominantly deal with sensory modality (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 168), in which the pleasure principle is allowed to be dominant. Wordless picturebooks are designed for readers to engage with, and to enjoy. However, they also require that a reader forms a narrative and as such could be classified within technical modality. This links with Nodelman's (1988: 187) view that wordless picturebooks require the reader to recognise that there exists a problem to solve. From this perspective, the illustrations need to meet a specific function and usefulness. Naturalistic and abstract modalities also feature naturally in children's picturebooks; for example, where naturalistic representation creates a beautiful world in which the children can immerse themselves and abstract representations, such as diagrams, may assist them in better understanding a concept (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 168).

The South African wordless picturebook, *A Very Nice Day* (Figure 3.5) by Anne Walton and Natalie Hinrichsen (2006), uses an abstract modality to communicate its narrative and, although basic, it effectively replaces the function of text in structuring events, time and space in a chronological manner (Stephens, 2000: 47-48). This wordless picturebook, aimed at very young children, serves to create a simple narrative while also representing the physical appearance of the character in the viewer's' mind. The book presents a visual narrative of a little girl as she goes about her day – getting dressed, going to the shops and returning home to make a meal – and is based in atypically South African milieu (Ntuli, 2011: 257). The character is a young African girl and, although the sequences are easily read to create a structure of events, the character includes a more complicated narrative question. Readers who do not view these events as plausible – a young girl, shopping on her own, rather than being taken care of by her parents – may have a lower modality reading of the book, whereas children from a South African context, in which child-headed households are not uncommon, may be better able to relate to, believe and elaborate on the sequence of images, leading to a higher

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modality. For example, reasons for the girl going shopping on her own, rather than with her parents, could be debated. The lack of text leaves the sequence open to a variety of interpretations, from simply being about a girl having a nice, arguably make-believe day of shopping, to being all about the aforementioned, serious subject matter. The simplicity of the book and target age audience suggests that the book is about assisting children in understanding concepts, such as shopping for food and basic hygiene, but a sequence of images, such as seen in *A Very Nice Day* already creates the potential for a more complex view of modality that Nikolajeva and Scott (2001: 174) believe is needed for the analysis of picturebooks.

The absence of an "authors voice" in wordless picturebooks creates a different experience, both for the author and the reader. The author relinquishes the guiding power that printed words can have, and the reader becomes central in the meaning-making process. The reader then plays a fundamental role in the storytelling process (Crawford & Hade, 2000: 67). The interpretation of wordless picturebooks consequently becomes an open-ended process, whereby viewers read and make sense of stories by drawing on their own personal backgrounds, experiences and histories to relate to the visual images encountered in the text.

Roland Barthes's text, *Death of the Author* (1968), is arguably the seminal work in repositioning the creation of meaning from the author (or in this instance, the illustrator) as the producer of meaning, to the reader, in that meaning is created through the act of reading (Johnson, 2009: 20). Consequently, the manner in which picturebooks are constructed has transformed to increasingly challenge the reader. According to Nikolajeva and Scott (2006: 250, in Johnson, 2009: 52), the readers are "required to bring their own answers, their own resolutions to the works, and to join forces with the author/illustrators in creating the scenario, the story and the interpretation". This is also apparent in reader response research conducted using wordless picturebooks, as discussed in Section 3.6. The reader becomes an active author in creating the story. When viewed in this light, a wordless picturebook contains illustrated elements that act as signs that invite the reader to interact with the text with the goal of creating a narrative. The absence of words in the genre means that readers are given an opportunity to create and respond using their own sense, without being bound by words that prescribe mood, feelings or meaning (Williams 1994: 38).

Authors such as Nières-Chevrel (2010), Sandra L. Beckett (2012), Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) and Nodelman (1988) have written comprehensively about how readers make sense from the visuals of picturebooks. Nières-Chevrel's (2010: 129-137) critical analysis of *L'Oage* (The Thunderstorm) by Anne Brouillard, for example, concludes that wordless picturebooks "draw on all the potential of visual literacy" and that, in combination with narrative, the "depicting power of pictures" has a make-believe power over the reader/viewer.

The illustrators of wordless picturebooks depend on the ability of pictures to suggest information that they do not actually offer, due to the absence of words to ground meaning. Nodelman (1988: 187) states that wordless picturebooks require that the reader recognise that there is a problem to be solved or a puzzle to be completed with regard to creating a story from the illustrations. This recognition may be lost to readers who glance cursorily at the pages, or who miss significant details in the pictures that serve to enrich a story and enhance characterisation (Weisner, in Houp, 2003: 22). Ramos and Ramos (2011: 237) write that the very fact that readers are confronted with this kind of [wordless] work, obliges them to "actively construct meaning by pinpointing the representations of (un)reality that the books offer". By searching for clues and then combining seemingly unrelated bits of visual information, readers provide interpretation to complete the pictures out of their own storehouse of information (Nodelman, 1988: 186-187). In his discussion of the characteristics of visual messages, Dondis (1973: 12-13) explains that visual information works specifically on three different levels: symbol (on the form of visual input), representation (of what we know) and the abstract (the pure visual message). She sums up the act of seeing as "a multi- dimensional process, whose most striking characteristic is its simultaneity". Furthermore, she writes that visual information may have a definable form, whether through shared experiences or through meanings attached to symbols. As such, consciously or not, we respond with a certain degree of conformity to visual meaning (Dondis, 1973: 22).

As seen in the previous section on multiliteracies and multimodality, the definition of being literate has undergone drastic changes since the New London Group's (1996) call for a much broader definition of literacy. Arbuckle (2004: 445), in her comments on the use of term "visual literacy," touches on the problems that accompany this broader view of literacy. She states that "visual literacy" often seems to be based on an oversimplified notion that visual images are a universal language. This is not the case, as even reading pictures requires certain cognitive skills, such as interpreting an arrangement of elements on a flat surface as representative of objects in the real world.

The broad field of visual literacy is loosely defined as the ability to communicate and understand through visual means. Readers of wordless picturebooks encounter numerous visual signs and use their own personal experience, perspective, alongside the context of the reading to assign significance and meanings to them. These sign systems aid readers in the formation of a framework that helps to craft their explanation of the text and shape their creation of the story (Nodelman, 1988, in Crawford & Hade 2000: 67). Nodelman (1988: 186-187) refers to semiotic conventions that are used in creating meaning from wordless picturebooks. These could include choices of media, colour and style that communicate a mood and atmosphere. Beckett (2014: 65) states that many book artists of the twentieth century have challenged the conventions of the codex form (binding, standard page sizes,

fixed sequence) as a means to explore new ways of telling, and consequently, reading, narratives – many of these within the children's book industry[30]. Paper choice, die-cuts, binding and three-dimensional elements all became resources for authors to tell their stories, as children "experience books not only with their eyes, but with all of their senses" (Beckett, 2014: 66).

Golden and Gerber's (1990) work indicates that children's reading of picturebooks contains aspects of intertextuality, in which both the individual illustrations and the picturebooks are viewed as signs. Their work demonstrates how visual cues powerfully affect the ways in which readers construct meaning with regard to the story narrative (Golden & Gerber, 1990). Likewise, Elster's (1998) research into influences on children's emergent readings of picturebooks indicated that visual prompts had a substantial influence on their reading. A reader's interpretation and understanding of a text was greatly reinforced by the illustrations. Research like this attests to the fact that reading is a meaning-making experience, and that such a process is supported and facilitated by children's capacity to react to visual cues found in a text (Crawford & Hade, 2000: 67). Wordless books, by their very nature then, serve to be "less corrective", due to the absence of a set type of storyline to clarify or amplify the illustrations (Crawford & Hade, 2000: 69).

Here, the researcher (Le Roux, 2012) opines that Arbuckle's concerns regarding the conventions required in interpreting images are set at ease when one considers the predominantly visual world in which we live. Children and adults alike are inundated by a wide variety of visual messages on a daily basis. These take the form of posters, billboards, television programmes and advertising in local shops and communities; most of these are even found in rural or poverty stricken areas (Le Roux, 2012: 17). Whereas certain cultural conventions will govern interpretation, and it is important for the illustrator to be aware of these, pictures have the ability to be unconsciously interpreted in similar ways (Dondis, 1973: 22). In discussing the narrative aspects of pictures, Ryan (2011) argues that pictures have specific narrative capabilities compared to language. For example, their capability to provide a sophisticated impression of the spatial arrangement of the story world. Furthermore, pictures can make use of facial expressions and body language to suggest emotions, and they can visually represent and illustrate subjective concepts such as beauty, rather than identifying it as a property and entrusting its interpretation to the reader's mind. Concluding their chapter on *Reading the Mental Processes in The Arrival*, Bellorín and Silva-Díaz (2013: 127) write that complex picturebooks (such as *The Arrival*) are capable of expressing not only action, as argued by Nodelman (1990, in Bellorín and Silva-Díaz, 2013: 119), but also emotion and understanding of character motives. The absence of

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[30] Beckett (2014: 66) refers specifically to Bruno Munari's *Prelibri* (Prebooks). These books included material such as wood, paper, cardboard, plastic and fabric and also experiment with different binding techniques, using twine, metal, plastic and string.

words in *The Arrival* heightens the sense of isolation that the main character feels and creates an emotional connection for the reader to engage with. Tan (2007) comments on the wordless format, stating that the novel confirmed the power of the silent narrative by firstly removing the distraction of words, and further compelling the reader to slow down, to spend time on each page so that they might "meditate" on each small detail and reflect on the story as a whole. *The Arrival* is a contemporary expression of the capacity of imagery to illustrate ideas and narratives that are far-reaching and communicate with audiences at different levels (Belfer, 2011).

Max (Figure 3.6), a wordless picturebook by South African illustrator Warwick Goldswain (2010), gives insight into how wordless picturebooks can signal character traits. Max is a young cheetah and is depicted watching television. His surrounding area is messy – the floors are covered in dirt, there is a fly buzzing around him and his body position is indicative of a lack of motivation to move. Max is, as the reviews of the book describe, lazy. Laziness is a characteristic that is not easily communicated visually, but, through the use of multiple modes in an ensemble, Goldswain (2010) effectively communicates this trait clearly. Irritation is also depicted effectively through facial features (Figure 3.7), as Max is distracted from watching television by a few noisy birds.

Pictures can incorporate language through the inclusion of objects containing writings; for example, signs or letters. Further, images can utilise established attributes and visual symbols, such as a skull for death, to compensate for their lack of ability to *name* characters (Ryan 2014). It should, however, be noted that symbols can differ between culture groups. Especially in the South African context, illustrators need an awareness of the cultural inferences that a symbols may have.

Research by Arizpe and Styles (2003, in Gerrard, 2008: 17) with children reading pictures demonstrates that many aspects of reading pictures are similar to reading written text. However, the manner in which pictures create narrative as opposed to being interpreted should also be considered. Nodelman (1988: viii) states that:

> the individual pictures in picture books rarely possess the harmonious balance we believe ought to exist and seek out in other forms of visual art... the pictures in picturebooks are literally "illustrations" - images that explain or clarify words and each other.

His argument leads to an investigation of narrative in wordless picturebooks.

3.5   NARRATIVE AND MULTIMODALITY IN WORDLESS PICTUREBOOKS

Wordless picturebooks are generally delineated by what they do *not* include; namely, words. As a result, they have often been assumed to only appeal to young readers who are not yet able to decode

print (Serafini, 2014: 24). As noted in the previous section, many researchers, such as Serafini (2014) and Beckett (2012), have challenged this bias and have suggested that the medium's potential be reconsidered.

In *New Perspectives on Narrative and Multimodality*, Ruth Page (2010: 12) writes that the multifaceted nature of storytelling is nothing new. Page states that "[s]tories might be spoken or written and in their performance employ gesture, movement, facial expression, and prosodic elements such as voice quality, pitch, pace and rhythm … put simply, stories do not consist of words alone". The manifold and amalgamated characteristics of semiotic resources employed in storytelling is, however, difficult to explain and, according to Page (2010: 12), is long overdue for systematic and close attention in narrative theory. From the literary perspective, using only pictures in the construction of narrative can offer opportunities for studying the manner in which picturebooks function and how the semiotics of image has evolved (Arizpe, 2013: 4).

Page (2010: 21) notes that "[n]arratives are embedded in embodied communicative events experienced in a particular environment". Traditional narrative theory preserves the notion of monomodality and gives preference to verbal resources, whereas a multimodal narrative analysis focuses on the integration of semiotic resources, rather than a comparison of different media, and investigates the narrative affordances of certain media (Page, 2010: 19, 21). This type of analysis also serves as a reminder of the nature of narrative context and that all narratives are received by an audience who are located in a specific cultural context. The materiality of modes indicates that there is a physical element involved in processing narrative, not only in the use of tools and technology used to produce narrative, but also in the human body's experience of narrative; for example, listening to a story or the sensorimotor manipulations of the page. These are often also experienced simultaneously – reading a book (sight), for example, while turning the pages and holding the books (touch). Narrative worlds also often depict sensory modality in stories – describing a feeling in words, or depicting an emotion in a facial expression (Page, 2010: 18-19).

This is specifically evident in wordless picturebooks, where the reader is required to verbalise the story, due to the lack of words. Images can depict narrative elements – for example, participants, objects, environments or actions – and are set up in a relationship between participants (in the image) and the viewer of the image. Participants are 'actors' in an image that carries out processes. Participants in the image may act and/or react to each other or other elements in the picture. Picturebook images often depict something happening to a participant, or a participant doing something to an object or another participant (Serafini, 2013: 63). Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 56-57) refer to 'narrative vectors', describing the connection between objects, participants and viewers as imaginary, or the "unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial

arrangements" portrayed in an image. Vectors direct a viewer's attention to specific aspects of an image and in this way, develop relationships among the various participants and objects in an image. Callow (1999, in Ndlangamandla, 2006: 46) asserts that vectors can be whole, or parts of objects, such as a person, or only the arm or leg of a person. They can also be in the form of invisible lines; for example, when a person looks in a specific direction. Vectors support the creation of actions and associations in a narrative.

When viewing *Abongi's Journey*, we can use pages 6-7 (Figure 3.8) as an example. Abongi's gaze serves as an invisible line that directs the viewer's gaze to either the children rolling down the hill in the tyres, or to the man struggling with the donkey at the bottom right of the double page spread (DPS). In the next page, Abongi catches a lift on the donkey cart, and his gaze in the previous pages could allude to the fact that he has noticed the cart and is heading in that direction, or he has decided to go and assist the man with the uncontrollable donkey. The line formed by the children and tyres rolling down the hill, the direction of the landscape lines and lastly, the direction of the birds flying overhead, all indicate that there is an event that will take place, or a relationship that will be formed with Abongi and the donkey cart. Considering the vectors and actions in narrative image can help a reader understand who is doing what to whom, who is present and who is absent and who is exhibiting power over whom (Serafini, 2013: 63).

3.6   READER RESPONSE

Wordless picturebooks are fascinating in terms of how readers are required to form narratives from them. Arizpe (2013: 164) states that wordless, or nearly wordless, picturebooks raise the question: What is a reader expected to do when encountering a narrative that has no words?

3.6.1   Making meaning – reader expectation

Beckett (2012: 81) writes:

> The expectation that the reader must tell the story in words seems to go back to the use of early wordless picturebooks which are generally presented as books from which the text has been removed with the expectations that it will be restored by readers, who are encouraged to verbalise the story.

As previously mentioned, Nodelman (1988) asserts that for a wordless picturebook to be successful, the reader needs to recognise that there is a problem to be solved or a story to be told. The chief abilities required by a reader of wordless picturebooks, as underlined by Bosch and Duran (2009, in Arizpe 2012: 169) include: "identifying relevant signs, reconstructing sequences; creating or discarding hypothesis, and reading actively and collaboratively". They further note just how difficult and

exhausting the reading activity can be. Most importantly, the majority of studies on wordless picturebooks highlight that readers are required to actively partakein the reading activity; even more with this genre than others. Read and Smith (in Whalen, 1994) identify reading skills inherent to wordless picturebooks to include sequencing, noting details, determining main ideas, making assumptions, drawing conclusions, noting cause and effect and making judgements. Arizpe (2014: 102) states that "it would seem that it is the degree to which readers are expected to actively engage that marks the difference between picturebooks with and without words which enables the reader to co-construct meaning".

Arizpe (2014: 101-102) correspondingly provides a comprehensive list of the main demands that wordless picturebooks place on readers. Readers need to draw on all their available resources to make sense of what they are looking at. Illustrators draw on the potential of a series of images by considering layout, colour, perspective, lines and borders. The level of complexity at which these visual resources appear will determine the level of sophistication needed of the reader. Readers are subsequently required to "actively collaborate" with visual images and fill in any gaps by using previous experience and "interpictorial knowledge".

Readers need to recognise that pictures exist in a sequence, rather than in isolation. This requires that readers form a narrative by connecting one picture to the next. By looking for clues, information and detail in pictures, readers must "elaborate on hypotheses about what is happening in the narrative sequence" (Serafini, 20014: 25). For first readings, readers work on what Arizpe calls the "running present" – in which readers do not know what is significant or will happen in the future. Readers should also be able to acknowledge that there exists an assortment of reading paths that can be explored using the visual narrative (Arizpe, 2014: 102).

Interpreting character emotions, in addition to their actions, is an important aspect of reading this genre of book. The lack of words may create uncertainty about a correct interpretation here. Ambiguity and uncertainty is consequently an aspect of wordless picturebooks that needs to be tolerated by readers. Lastly, Arizpe (2014: 102) refers to Rowe (1996: 232) in that readers must recreate the implied text into their own vernacular, which has been suppressed by the wordless form.

Bosch and Duran (2009, in Arizpe, 2001; 169) emphasise how different readers experienced wordless picturebooks. The readers they observed in their study focussed on distinctive features of the book: the three-year-old focused on the actions of the character; the nine-year-old followed the character's undertakings and was familiar with a number of the historical and cultural references; the 20-year-old comic book reader made a careful reading and concluded that: "This is a book you tell to yourself"; the 47-year-old skilled reader 'suspect[ed] there is a key or clue to discover' and the 66-year-old, who

was less competent in using picturebooks, did not really understand or follow the narrative, but enjoyed recognising cultural and historical references. The readings were therefore founded on their previous visual reading experiences and on their intertextual and social knowledge.

3.6.2   Reader Response Studies

Studies that aim to make sense of how readers/viewers make meaning from wordless picturebooks generally combine picture-book theory with reader-response approaches based on the Reception Theory (Arizpe, 2014: 105). As this study uses a similar approach, it proves useful to review research that focused on how readers responded to wordless picturebooks.

British literary theorist, Terry Eagleton (1996: 64-65) describes Reception Theory as a "fairly novel development" that examines the reader's role in literature. He writes that for literature to happen, the reader is as essential as the author, and that without the reader, literary texts would not exist at all. Reception Theory is defined by Holub (1984: xii) as "a general shift in concern from the author and the work to the text and the reader." The process of reading in reception theory is viewed as a dynamic movement which unfolds over time. The literary work itself exists purely as a set of "schemata" or "general directions", which the reader actualises in the reading process (Eagleton, 1996: 67). Ultimately, reception theory requires that the notion of interpretation should be included in the process of the literary experience (Kinoshita, 2004: 2). The need for this is quite apparent in the context of wordless picturebooks, which is a process of interpreting illustrations to create meaning. Research on reader response to wordless picturebooks dates back to the 1990s, Barbara Kiefer's (1994) *The Potential of Picturebooks: From Visual Literacy to Aesthetic Understanding* being among the first. The common understanding that exists between all the studies, regardless of differences in background, context, reader age or ability, is that the act of reading is an "active transaction" between the reader and the wordless picturebook (Rosenblatt, 1968, in Arizpe, 2014: 105).

Arizpe (2013: 170) concludes her findings on a group of reader response studies with wordless picturebooks (Arizpe, 2013: 170, cites Graham, 1998; Crawford & Hade, 2000; Pantaleo, 2007; Bosch & Duran, 2009; Arizpe, 2010; Arizpe et al., 2014; and Nájera Trujillo, 2008). She notes that research on readers' responses indicates that wordless picturebooks require a heightened co-authoring role which allows the imagination to explore different possible readings, and the reader makes use of intertextual and cultural knowledge. Lastly, the reader's own ability is also a consideration in making meaning from wordless picturebooks.

When looking in more depth at the study by Crawford and Hade (2000: 66–77) which Arizpe reviews, the researchers found that "authentic transactions" with wordless books are possible. The narratives

created by their research participants were "rich with references to the written word, visual images, and other experience-based texts that made up their everyday lives". Furthermore, the study found that the sense-making process in the reading of wordless picturebooks was:

> …facilitated by the readers' inclination and ability to construct meaning by applying their prior knowledge and experiences to the reading; bringing many different texts to bear on the reading transaction; assuming multiple perspectives in the telling of the stories; incorporating story language and story rituals in each reading; and including active, play-like responses as part of the reading event.

These participants (children) explored wordless books and created meaning through the visual texts in ways that were similar to how readers make sense out of printed texts. The different sense-making themes, referred to by Arizpe (2014: 106) as "semiotic, sense-making processes", noted in the study will briefly be discussed below and will be further discussed in relation to the primary research of this study in Chapter 4.

Sense-Making Through Prior Knowledge and Experiences: Crawford and Hade (2000: 66) refer to Rosenblatt (1978) and Smith (1988) in stating that good readers bring their prior knowledge and experiences to be applicable to their reading, rather than reading in a vacuum. In addition to understanding the basic conventions of the book format, the children who participated in the study also had prior knowledge on a range of the subject matter to each story, drawing on this knowledge and experience to consider and interpret the signs they were faced with in the illustrations. Conversely, a lack of prior experience can also influence an individual's reading of a wordless picturebook. Encountering signs to which readers have not been previously exposed may lead to unconventional interpretations of the illustrations (Crawford & Hade, 2000: 66). Arizpe (2013: 170) notes that:

> The degree to which readers are aware of and act on the demands of wordless picturebooks depends on age and previous experience with picturebooks with and without words. It would seem that for children who for either cultural or socioeconomic motives, have had less contact with picturebooks in general and wordless picturebooks in particular, it takes more time to get [a]round the idea that not all books have words and move of authority.

Sense-Making Through Intertextuality: Author Jane Yolen (in Sipe, 2000: 73) states that stories always "lean on other stories", and our understanding of stories is partly in relationship to other narratives we have read or heard. Furthermore, most texts allude, explicitly or implicitly, to other texts in our lives. Thus, reading becomes a "sense-making process that involves a layering of texts and meanings" (Crawford & Hade, 2000: 66). These texts do not always exist in the form of books, but can feature as television programmes and other media formats. Crawford and Hade's (2000: 66) study states that "[g]ood readers are able to read new texts by applying their memories of other texts and by

determining the interrelationships among these texts (Leland & Harste, 1995; Meek, 1988; Stephens, 1990)".

Sense-Making Through Multiple Perspective-Taking: Children tend to tell stories from a particular perspective, but their understanding of a book can be heightened by viewing the storyline from the perspective of different characters within the same story (Crawford & Hade, 2000: 66). This was demonstrated in their study by Arlee, a 4-year old boy, who moved from a first-person perspective, situated within the pictures, to a more removed, third-person perspective situated outside the frame of the book. It was also found that children combined past and present tense in telling the story from the wordless picturebook (Arizpe, 2013: 12).

Similarly, researchers from the *Visual Journeys* project (Arizpe, 2010; Arizpe, Colomer & Martínez-Roldán, 2015) noted that during the reading of wordless picturebooks, their participants took on the position of 'translator' of the pictures, speaking 'for' the characters. They also demonstrated an awareness of the need for them to become the narrators or 'writers' during the reading activity (Bellorín & Silva-Díaz, 2011 in Arizpe, 2013: 170). The study included two wordless picturebooks; namely, *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (2006) and *Flotsam* by David Wiesner (2006), which were read by groups of readers from various immigrant communities, and located in different countries.

Sense-Making Through Story Language and Story Rituals: Crawford and Hade (2000: 66) report that children who experience joint reading activities regularly, such as read-alouds, are likely to internalise the customs and language of story time. This familiar routine can provide scaffolding effects, as their previous experience with books will have an effect on their language use and approach to stories. What is interesting to note about this specific sense-making ability is that in this study, many of the children did not have a culture of reading at home, nor was there any specific ritual that was tied to books or 'story time'. Despite this, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, ritual and routine was something that became important to the participants for the duration of the reading programme.

Sense-Making Through Active, Playful Behaviour: An increasing number of researchers have conveyed the connection between literacy and play over recent years (for example, Campbell, 1998; Christie, 1991; Pellegrini & Galda, 1993 in Crawford and Hade 2000: 66). Lewis (2001: 81) explains that "play is what children do, not because they are in a state of innocence, but because they are perpetually learning". According to Sipe (2000: 84), play with wordless books will often take the form of talking back to the book and entering the book through other books; perhaps as one of the characters. Children manipulate the story for their own creative purposes.

To summarise, research into readers' responses to wordless picturebooks has established that the characteristics of these books increase the active, co-authoring skills that readers already apply to

reading picturebooks with words. However, the degree to which readers are mindful of the requirements of the medium and to which they are able to act on these demands, depend on previous experience with both picturebooks and wordless picturebooks (Arizpe, 2014: 106-107). What is interesting to note is that few studies have investigated how adult readers interact with and respond to wordless picturebooks, with the main focus being on how children react to the genre (Arizpe, 2014: 107). It is hoped that this study will partly address this gap in the literature, as interviews were held predominantly with the parents/care-givers during the primary data collection phase (refer to Chapter 3).

3.7   WORDLESS PICUREBOOKS AS EDUCATION TOOLS

Wordless picturebooks are not only a creative outlet for the artist/illustrator, but also serve an important educational purpose. An increasing amount of literature is available about the benefits that wordless picturebooks can offer readers, parents and educators. Crawford and Hade (2000: 66) state that wordless picturebooks have been given additional attention in educational studies, with many aspects related to the reading of these texts being examined. Literature encouraging the use of wordless picturebooks first appeared in the 1970s (Dowhower, 1997: 60). Arizpe (2014: 102) writes that from an educational perspective, wordless picturebooks have presented opportunities in supporting pupils who struggle with reading in their development of this skill. Other studies look specifically at investigating readers and reading – some aimed at understanding the processes of meaning-making, whereas others arrive at approaches to assist reading or at improving the manner in which these are communicated (Arizpe, 2014: 102).

Wordless picturebooks within classroom situations and literacy programmes have been well documented in international research during the last decade. The use of the genre as a tool to develop early literacy and to nurture a fondness for reading in both children and adults has been documented numerous times in journals such as *The Reading Teacher*. Dowhower (1997: 65-70) summarises the research conducted to date on wordless picturebooks and focuses on other areas that may contribute to knowledge and use of the genre, including descriptive intervention and assessment studies. Jalongo, Dragich, Conrad and Zhang (2002: 167), in *Using Wordless Picture Books to Support Emergent Literacy,* argue that these books provide an excellent resource for educators of children. Wordless books link visual literacy (learning to decode things), cultural literacy (learning the features and anticipations of social groups) and literacy with print (acquiring reading and writing skills) and it is through these linkages that the genre supports the development of basic literacy skills. Reese (1996: 172) also promotes the use of the genre in the classroom situation, asserting that the books can be

used to develop reading and language competence. Peck (1989: 138) and Handel (1992: 116) outline the basic principles of language development while Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson (2003: 758-770) expand on this basic framework in their discussion on using images to improve comprehension for struggling middle school readers.

Jalongo et al. (2002: 168) argue that wordless picturebooks develop handling behaviours that are necessary for children to learn how a book works. Basic skills, which are often taken for granted, are developed as children learn to differentiate the front from the back of the book, learn to turn pages, and navigate from left to right (this can be subverted by the illustrator or the nature of the wordless book, but for the purposes of the study, "conventional books" will be referred to, which use the basic codex system). Furthermore, many children "recognise, interpret and express themselves in pictures long before they master print" (Jalongo et al., 2002: 168).

Lewis (2001: 59) asserts that due to the fact that children born in the twenty-first century's environment are filled with images, they are "more likely to possess richer and better understanding of visual imagery and its modes of deployment than any other generation in the history of humankind". Wordless picturebooks address contemporary children's strengths by communicating a story solely through images, subsequently encouraging children to engage with visual literacy skills in order to make conclusions about what is pictured, as well as to respond to the details in the images. An essential skill required by individuals, both in and out of the school environment, is the ability to interpret visual images. As seen in the section on multiliteracies, too often the emphasis of "being literate" falls on being able to read written or printed text, and not on making meaning throughout modalities (Serafini, 2014a: 25).

Knudsen-Lindauer (1988, in Serafini, 2014a: 25) believes that wordless picturebooks offer numerous didactic benefits for emerging readers. These include developing pre-reading skills (similar to book handling behaviour in the aforementioned section), sequential and inferential thinking and comprehension of story and visual discrimination. When looking at the stories created by children reading wordless picturebooks from a pedagogic point of view, the genre can be used to determine whether they can identify and reason about various aspects of a story, such as the main idea, possibilities that exist (prediction) and if they can associate events in the story with their own lives and personal experiences. Jenson (in Dowhower, 1997: 65) argues that by analysing children's spontaneous story construction using a wordless book, insight can be gained into story knowledge; namely, story structure, story language patterns and dialogue patterns.

Noteworthy to this research is a study conducted by Sulzby (in Dowhower, 1997: 70) which highlights the importance of pictures in the process of becoming literate. She devised five categories in a

storybook reading classifications scheme. The first four of these are of interest when considering the use of wordless picturebooks – none of these categories include text, but the pictures allow for a 'pretend' storybook reading to be negotiated, as the child is 'reading' by only looking at the storybook pictures. Sulzby (in Dowhower 1997: 70) considers this pretend reading a noteworthy link in the process of becoming literate, because as individuals develop narratives, they develop a sense of story and demonstrate an understanding of sequence, while practicing oral and written storytelling.

In Sulzby's first category, the reader attends to the images without forming a story; namely, labelling, pointing, commenting and following the action. The second category sees the reader forming oral stories, similar to a conversation, by observing the pictures. In the third, the reader fluctuates between sounding like a 'reader' with modulation, and sounding like a storyteller. The fourth category sees readers attending to the pictures by telling a verbatim like story and sounding like a reader. Sulzby also emphasises the switch in registers as being significant in these categories (Dowhower 1997: 70).

However, Nodelman (1988: 1919) warns that, if not approached properly, wordless picturebooks can turn out to be a 'threat to literacy' if misused by children who formulate a story whilst ignoring what the pictures essentially show. Similarly, both Dowhower and Groff remain sceptical of the genre's ability to support the development of "real reading" skills (Arizpe, 2014: 103). Groff (in Nodelman, 1988: 186) argues that the major role that television plays in children's lives can prewire them to see plots in pictures. This prewiring is not present when children see plots in writing. Groff (1974, in Arizpe, 2014: 103) also holds the rather extreme view that "reading a wordless picturebook deprives children of hearing literary language and may hinder learning to read and literary appreciation". However, more recent research, such as that by Sulzby, indicates the higher order cognitive skills that are harnessed in making meaning of wordless picturebooks and that have a positive impact on learning to read, in addition to visual literacy (Arizpe , 2014: 104). The wordless picturebook as a genre supports learners who are not yet able to decode print or develop their sense of mastery as readers and writers (Jalongo et al., 2002: 168). The non-prescriptive nature of wordless picturebooks gives readers the opportunity to construct assorted interpretations of the same book and allows them to reread it to reconsider initial impressions. Encouraging this type of contemplation of a text and exploration of potential meaning is a significant aspect of becoming visually literate (Serafini, 2014: 26). It would appear from the majority of the researcher's findings, that wordless picturebooks are generally accepted as a beneficial medium in the development of literacy.

The genre's ability to address different audiences means that the genre lends itself as one that can be shared and appreciated by children and adults at different levels of emergent reading (Jalongo et al., 2002: 168). Furthermore, wordless picturebooks are not only for beginner readers; adults who are more skilled in acts of verbalisation can also read the book and construct their own interpretations.

Despite the fact the two distinct readers, adult and child, may not read the book in the same way, both are able to appreciate the form. Wordless picturebooks are also capable of crossing generational boundaries (Houp, 2003: 22). *Unspoken: A Story From the Underground Railroad* (Cole, 2012), *The Middle Passage: White Ships/Black Cargo* (Feelings, 1995) and *Mirror* (Baker, 2010) are sophisticated visual narratives which invoke considerations regarding social issues generally reserved for an older audience. Through their ability to intersect with more mature themes and topics, the genre can act as an instrument for sharing and discussing social issues with older audiences (Serafini, 2012: 26). This is referred to by Beckett as Crossover Fiction, which was discussed in the introduction to the genre.

The power of illustrations to encourage conversations that deal with social issues in a way that allows for personal opinion, discovery and reflection is reminiscent of Martha Nussbaum's deliberation that the arts and humanities teach children imaginative thinking. Through the development of the "narrative imagination" (Ellison, in Nussbaum, 2010: 107), individuals are able to develop their ability to see the full humanness of the people they encounter on a daily basis - who are from different cultures – and are empowered to see beyond stereotypes of race, gender and ethnicity.

Therefore, literature for children should not only be considered as a means to cultivate social change, but should be treated as immensely powerful texts, which demand responsibility when used, created, and in this case, illustrated (Hunt, 2009: 15). The transformative power of children's literature, both socially and aesthetically, is arguably in its ability to envisage and engage young readers with the possibilities of new worlds and new world orders (Reynolds, 2009: 107). In the case of wordless picturebooks, although content is crafted for a reader in way that allows for meaning-making, the more flexible interpretation of the genre, and the meaning-making processes linked to these books, can serve as what Reynolds (2009: 108) refers to as "an intellectual platform from which to build new thinking … [s]uch platforms are necessary but rare". She concludes her section on the topic by stating that "whether intellectual, social or creative in their focus … children's books have the potential to influence the future". A study by Dan Johnson (in Sleek, 2014), a psychology researcher, also revealed that the investigation of fictional characters' private lives can potentially counter racial and cultural biases. Johnson's findings indicated that well written, engaging fiction can help people establish a rapport with characters from different cultures. Consequently, the readers' tendency to stereotype and judge is disrupted in the process. Wordless picturebooks can achieve this through challenging stereotypes in illustrations. Many picturebooks already challenge stereotypes such as gender roles, with books like *Not Every Princess* (2014) by Jeffrey and Lisa Bone, exploring the notion that being a princess can mean more than being female and waiting for a prince.

Children are functional participants in their own cultural formation. Hodge and Kress (1988: 240) write that they are neither merely etched by culture, nor do they simply absorb cultural forms, values and

processes. Assimilation – whether used in reference to a child or an adult, into a society or culture, or in terms of the accumulation of knowledge – fails to acknowledge the individual as a semiotic agent who adds to the larger semiotic system. The process of meaningful creation by children, from birth until death, is constantly interactive and dynamic (Hodge & Kress, 1988: 240). Consequently, an appreciation of children's roles in semiosis should be approached from a stance that gives their ability and independence more credit, rather than assuming they are a blank slate on which culture can impose values, behaviour and beliefs. Neil Gaiman (in Naidoo, 2013), a celebrated author of adult and children's fiction, agrees that reading fosters empathy. He states that "[e]mpathy is a tool for building people into groups, for allowing us to function as more than self-obsessed individuals … I don't think there is such a thing as a bad book for children".

3.8   CONCLUSION

Within a South African context, where there still exist differences between class, race, ethnic divisions and substantial disparities between the rich and poor, this type of skill set could be extremely useful in teaching children and adults alike to have empathy for one another. The active involvement of children in discussions of the art in the book can act as a means of encouraging children to approach the world with a more conscientious awareness and an inquiring outlook. It would appear then, from the outcome of this review, that wordless picturebooks are generally accepted as a beneficial medium in the development of literacy and social skills.

The next chapter deals with early reading practices and joint reading, with specific reference to social learning theory and reading for enjoyment. The South African context in respect of wordless picturebooks is also discussed.

CHAPTER 4: EARLY READING DEVELOPMENT AND JOINT READING

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Reading for enjoyment begins at a young age, with early reading skills playing an integral part in fostering children's confidence in using books. Reading for pleasure is gaining focus as a research priority, with studies emphasising both its education value, as well as the benefits associated with personal development (Clark & Rumboll, 2006: 9). Wordless picturebooks are often used in early reading activities with preliterate children in a manner that connects visual literacy, cultural literacy and concepts of print to encourage the development of literacy skills (Jalongo et al., 2002: 167).

Sadly, many South African children are never exposed to early reading experiences; a contributing factor to what has been dubbed a "National Crisis of Reading" (Spaull, Van der Berg, Wills, Gustafsson & Kotzé, 2016). South Africans generally have a very poor reading rate, with very few parents reading to, or with their children. Spedding et al. (2007: 5) found that children from rural and remote areas and indigenous children have been shown to be at particular risk of low literacy. Page Ahead's Children's Literacy Programme (2014) places further emphasis on the significance of exposure to books in their article, *The Importance of Children's Literacy*, where they write that:

> Children who lack early exposure to reading struggle academically, tend to suffer from low self-esteem, and are at much higher risk of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and delinquency. The children most at risk come from low-income families where parents do not or cannot read to their children and for whom books are an unaffordable luxury.

This chapter investigates early childhood reading and the skills that are fostered in developing a love for reading. Social constructivist theory is considered in how parents model skills for children during joint reading practices, and motivating factors in developing a love for reading are discussed. The South African context in this chapter looks at the current culture of reading and barriers to reading. As part of this discussion, South African literacy levels, availability of reading materials in mother tongue and the publishing industry are contextualised alongside an investigation of the production and use of wordless picturebooks locally.

4.2   EARLY CHILDHOOD READING

Greene (1951, in Reynolds, 2009: 106) asserts that childhood reading, and consequently the books read during childhood, are intensely influential. He states that "[t]he influence of early books is profound. So much of the future lies on shelves; early reading has more influence on conduct than

any religious teaching" (Greene, cited in Sinyard, 2003, in Reynolds, 2009: 105-106). Early childhood specialists have long accepted the significance of language and literacy in preparing children to succeed in school. Although literacy is not the focus of this paper, there is evidence that the activities involved in early literacy, such as storybook reading and shared book reading, are viewed as a means of maintaining interest and engagement in reading, even when children can read independently (Meiers, 2004: 16).

Early or emergent literacy consists of the abilities, knowledge and mindsets that form the developmental foundations for reading and writing and is fundamental in facilitating the type of early learning experiences that link to "academic achievement, reduced grade retention, higher graduation rates and enhanced productivity in adult life" (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2006; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998: 848). As the focus of this paper is on wordless picturebooks, it is necessary to take cognizance of Jerome Harste, Virginia Woodward and Carolyn Burke's (1984) study on emergent literacy. Siegle (2006: 66) states that its importance lies in the emphases on sign-making in all modes, rather than privileging written language. Both studies highlighted that fact that when children wrote, they used talking, gesturing, drama and drawing as part of their meaning-making process. Harste et al. (1984: 37) noted that these were an "intimate and integral" part of the meaning-making process[31].

It is evident that early literacy practices and early childhood reading are important, not only in an academic and vocational sense, but also in fostering a culture of reading that can be passed from parent to child. To further investigate this, a discussion on social constructivist theory and its basic assumptions proves useful.

4.2.1   Social constructivist theory

In an article entitled *Developing Partnerships with Families Through Children's Literature,* Lilly and Green (2014) state that the social constructivist theory, founded on Vygotskian[32] principles, includes a cultural aspect to the dialogue surrounding children's acquisition of literacy. The basic principles of Vygotsky's theory is that the knowledge that children construct is situated in a socially negotiated cultural context and that language functions as a key element in children's appropriation of knowledge. The most efficient way of creating knowledge occurs when adults *scaffold*, or support, children's development at suitable levels. Lastly, the 'zone of proximal development' is a continuum

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[31] Conducted more than 30 years ago, these studies remain important in that they disputed the prevailing belief in conventional or adult-defined literacy as the lens for and endpoint of literacy development. Their work also remains important in terms of where this study situates wordless picturebooks as a tool to develop a culture of reading.
[32] Vygotsky was a social development theorist

of behaviour in which children gain knowledge through being assisted by an adult or more experienced peer (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, in Lilly & Green, 2014*)*.

Social constructivist theory views language as the foundation of the relationship between literacy development and social environments. Supportive adults assist younger children in reaching higher levels of learning through a process called 'scaffolding' (Lilly & Green, 2014), which refers to "teacher support for learning, in which both teacher and learning are co-participants in a learning activity" (Guthrie, Wigfield & Perencevich, 2004: 58). The word 'teacher' can also refer to anyone who is considered more knowledgeable than the child – as pointed out by Vygotsky (1978: 86) when he refers to "more capable peers" – and can consequently be an older sibling, relative or parent. In the beginning of a scaffolding activity, the teacher generally performs high proportions of the activity while the learner, student or child initially only contributes smaller amounts. As learner capacity and knowledge increases, the teacher takes a less prominent role until the activity can be completed entirely by the learner, student or child (Guthrie, Wigfield & Perencevich, 2004: 58).

When viewed in the context of this study, the parent's role in development is widely acknowledged in Vygotsky's (1978: 86) 'Zone of Proximal Development', which constitutes what children cannot do autonomously, but can do with the help of an adult. Based on this understanding, two of Vygotsky's conclusions are particularly noteworthy when considered in the context of this research. Firstly, the only good education is an education that leads to development; and secondly, what children do today with the help of an adult (or a more capable peer), they will do tomorrow independently (Kravtsova, 2009: 11). In connection with social semiotics, 'schooling' from a Vygotskian perspective necessitates that the history, which each participant brings in his or her construction of the setting, should be taken into consideration. The participant's individual history and identity within settings then becomes part of the consideration of their dynamic and evolving nature (Smagorinsky, 2011: 20).

Strickland and Riley-Ayers (2006: 9) note that "the connection between supportive parental involvement and children's early literacy development is well established". Research by Snow et al. (in Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2006: 9) has indicated that homes in which parents model the uses of literacy and involve children in literacy activities, result in children who are more school ready than others. In social learning theory, Albert Bandura (1977 in McLeod, 2011) outlines how children observe the people[33] around them behaving in various ways (McLeod, 2011). Children pay attention to models[34] and encode their behaviour, which they may also imitate at a later time (McLeod, 2011).

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[33] These people can be parents, family members or other individuals that a child has contact with – in person or via media such as books and television.

[34] The individuals that are observed.

Consequently, children who grow up in a household where the parents are active readers may model that behaviour, which influences their own reading practice in later stages of their lives. A child's development of language and literacy practices further reflects the cultural environment in which they are raised (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, in Lilly & Green, 2014).

Motivation is a key factor in teaching children to read and in fostering a culture of reading for pleasure. Intrinsic motivation occurs when children are able to perform tasks based on their interests, needs and curiosities. Extrinsic motivation is caused by an external reward, which can take many forms, such as attention (Fawson & Moore, 1999: 326). Laura Berk (2011: 452) writes about achievement-related attributions, defining achievement motivation as "the tendency to persist at challenging tasks". The emergence of these attributions occur by the end of the second year of a child's life, when children turn to adults for evaluation of their accomplishments (Berk, 2006, citing Stipek, Recchia, & McClintic, 1992). The child's *experience of success* is affected by these attributions, which in turn influence their inclination to 'try hard' in the future.

However, Berk (2006: 425) notes that by the age of three, some children begin to give up easily when faced with a challenging task. After failing at a task, the three-year-old concludes that they cannot do it. "Non-persisters" generally have a history of critical feedback regarding their worth and achievement from their mothers, in stark contrast to their highly motivated age mates, whose mothers offer reassurance and information on how to succeed in a patient manner (Berk, 2006: 425, cites Kelley, Brownell & Campbell, 2000). Adult evaluations are internalised by preschoolers, with persisters developing a view of themselves as "good", while the negative feedback that non-persisters receive is believed to be deserved. At this early age already, non-persisters appear to construct their self-worth on other's judgments, instead of their own inner standards, which subsequently manifests in early signs of "maladaptive achievement behaviours that become more common during middle childhood" (Berk, 2006: 425). The home environment is the site where autonomous achievement motivation is primarily established (Ruhland & Feld, 1977: 1363) and consequently, the environmental support of children's needs is of great importance as they develop achievement motivation.

'Mastery-oriented' and 'learned-helplessness' children is another aspect of motivation that Berk explores. Children who have high achievement motivation make "mastery-oriented attributions" (Louw & Louw, 2014: 239). In other words, they credit their success to their own ability and believe that ability can be altered through increased effort. In contrast, children who develop "learned helplessness" attribute their failures to ability. Success is credited to an external force, such as luck, and these children hold an "entity view of ability", believing that it cannot be changed regardless of extra effort (Cain & Dweck, 1995, in Berk, 2006: 453; Louw & Louw, 2014: 239). Children with learned

helplessness generally have parents who perceive their child as not being very capable (Berk, 2006: 436).

Barbara Wall (in Falconer, 2009: 369) distinguishes three modes of address in children's fiction: 'single address' to a child reader alone, 'double address' to a child and to an adult reading over the child's head, and lastly 'dual address' to a child and adult as equals, but distinctly different readers. Wall views dual address as rarely occurring in children's literature, but, it can be argued, as Falconer (2009: 369) does, that recent years have seen an increase in this type of address. Furthermore, she questions the changing attitudes of ever increasingly fluid definitions of age and identity, questioning what it means to read as a child, or to read as an adult. For the purposes of this research, reference is made to developmental theories; for example, Piaget and Vygotsky where the child reader is distinguished from the adult reader. This said, it can be argued that wordless picturebooks is a medium that makes use of dual address during joint reading between parent/primary caregiver and child, where both become active contributors in the storytelling process.

4.3   READING FOR PLEASURE

As previously mentioned, there are clear links between literacy skills and reading for pleasure, which in turn assist in developing a culture of reading. Reading for pleasure is also referred to as independent reading, leisure reading, voluntary reading or recreational reading and can be defined as reading done out of a person's own free will, anticipating the satisfaction they will acquire from the action of reading (National Library of New Zealand).

In a 2012 report by the Education Standards Research Team (based in the United Kingdom and published by the UK Department of Education), entitled *Research Evidence on Reading for Pleasure*, Clark and Douglas (2011: 4) reported that "young people who read below the expected level for their age were the least likely to read a variety of materials outside of class". In contrast, those who were capable of reading above their expected age level engaged in reading more of the traditional forms of reading, such as fiction, non-fiction, poems and plays. This report further emphasised the role of the parent in reading for pleasure, stating that "[p]arental involvement in a child's literacy has been reported as a more powerful force than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004, cited in Clark & Rumbold, 2006: 21)". Similarly, Clark and Rumbold (2006: 6) reference research from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2002) which indicates that enjoyment from reading has more influence on children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status. Home environments in which reading is promoted as a source of entertainment also contributed to

intrinsically motivate children to read (Baker, Serpell & Sonnenschein, 1995, cited in Clark & Rumbold, 2006 in UK Department of Education, 2012: 22). Lastly, the report indicates that households in which reading is viewed as being important, positively influenced children's tendency to continue reading for pleasure (Clark & Rumboll, 2006: 9).

An increasing number of studies are, however, emphasising the importance of reading for pleasure for both educational and personal development. These findings indicate that promoting reading can have a major impact on the future of children, youths and adults. Interestingly, the links between reading for pleasure and literacy accomplishments have been recognised predominantly by research into children's reading. Limited literature exists within the field of adult literacy, perhaps because reading for pleasure is less measurable than other influences on a non-reading adult's quality of life, such as income (Clark & Rumboll, 2006: 9). Research with children has, however, indicated that reading for pleasure is positively linked to a number of literacy-related benefits (Clark & Rumboll, 2006: 9). Joint reading is seen as one of the earliest means to develop literacy and foster a love of reading within the home. This is discussed in the following section.

4.4 JOINT READING

Reading with a child is an apparently ordinary activity, yet children's literature provides new and different ways of learning and identifying with both everyday events and make-believe worlds. Books provide a chance to experience life from various perspectives (Seden, 2007: 135). According to Dwyer and Newman (2008: 498) children can respond to book reading from as young as six months. It is as such generally accepted that it is never too early to start reading with a child.

Children commonly grow up with their parents or a close family member and these adults, along with any older siblings or relatives, become the child's first teachers (Desmond, 2006: 5). Joint attention and parent-child book reading are widely recognised as being one of the most valuable interpersonal contexts that assist in children's early vocabulary development in Western societies (for example, Bruner, 1975; Highberger & Brooks, 1973; Ninio & Bruner, 1978) (Farrant, 2012: 38). Book sharing is defined by Price, Van Kleeck and Huberty (2009: 171) as an activity "during which parents mediate texts for young children, 'scaffolding' their comprehension through interactions about the content and the illustrations and helping the child to participate in more sophisticated ways than he or she would be capable of independently". These types of activities are also referred to as read-alouds, book sharing and storybook reading (Pollard-Durodola, 2015: 1) and provides an ideal opportunity for parents and children to co-construct knowledge and meaning in a social setting.

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Studies indicate that when parents engage in joint reading with their children, it not only contributes to the child's development, but also to a perceived improvement in their 'parenting' capacity[35]. Parent participants in Seden's (2007: 137) study explained that in addition to the benefits that joint reading had for their children, they also felt that they (the parent) personally benefitted from reading together. Books were fixed in their parenting activities. Similar to Vygotsky's view on children's learning, De Bruin-Parecki (1999: 22) suggests that children are not born with an understanding of how to apply their knowledge and experiences in "literate" ways to printed and/or pictorial texts. They need to learn tactics to understand texts in a manner that is appropriate for their culture or social group. Joint reading creates an opportunity for parents and children to co-construct an understanding of texts and meaning in a social setting.

Although children may be exposed to read-alouds at school, parents have a distinct advantage in their ability to connect story book features to personal experiences that they have shared with their child. Further, they also have insight into the distinctive character of their child – their traits, interests, desires and abilities. Parents and their children have an emotional bond that can be employed to connect book reading to an experience of enjoyment for the child (Machado, 2010: 608). Louw and Louw (2014: 177) describe how parental behaviours during book reading activities can expose children to "new worlds and concepts rarely used in everyday conversation or encountered in their everyday life".

As parents and children navigate their way through a joint reading session, they use talk to communicate with each other about the book they are sharing. Talk naturally plays an integral role in shared book reading (Evans, 2013: 107). Shared book reading also provides occasions for parents to engage in "decontextualised talk", which is described as discussion that goes beyond only the pictures in the books to include new and unfamiliar concepts. This type of talk tends to have higher complexity than talk in other parent-child interactions; for example, during mealtimes. Consequently, it serves to improve vocabulary, understanding and emergent literacy. Through the use of age appropriate books, mothers can "scaffold" their children's mastery of language, even with preliterate children. Evans states that joint reading or book sharing is important for children, as making sense of a text on their own is seldom enough for meaningful understanding of the text to take place. Arizpe and Styles (2003, in Evans, 2013: 107) found that children's understanding of books is usually situated in the thinking and talking about books, which often happens between different readings of the same book.

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[35] Parenting capacity is defined by Seden (2007: 135) as "both the functional aspects needed to ensure that children are fed, clothed and kept safe and also the ability to respond with empathy and sensitivity to each individual child's particular developmental needs".

With regard to the benefits that joint reading has for children, Seden (2007: 134-135) explains how theorists about children's literature report that joint reading creates a capacity for the child to interact with a range of literacies, to develop imagination and empathy and fosters the child's social, psychological and spiritual development. Seden's (2007: 137-138) study highlights that apart from reading aptitudes, the parent/child relationship also benefitted from joint reading activities. Parents that participated in the study all shared the view that emotional closeness, empathetic receptiveness and secure attachment in their families were promoted by shared reading. The process of reading itself was important to parents in creating emotional warmth and stability with their children.

Challenges to joint reading can be found in context where a parent is illiterate; where parents are not confident in their reading abilities; or where parents have had limited exposure to reading books and other literacy practices throughout their lives. The instructional know-how of an adult is a fundamental element of interactive book reading, and in these cases, a parent may feel intimidated or that they are unable to make sense of the print that accompanies a picture book. However, reading does not necessarily need to begin with written text. Defined simply as an active, constructive, *meaning-making process* (Colorado State University, 2011), reading includes visual perception. In Seden's (2007: 137) study, parents indicated that they wanted to impart a love of reading for pleasure and education. This desire was irrespective of their own literacy background. Radebe (in Morris, 2007: 33), believes that through the use of picturebooks, the illiterate parent is able to create a narrative via the contextual clues of the visual story. In this way, he or she is still able to share a rich experience with the child. By completely eliminating words from the book, wordless picturebooks can progress one step further, allowing the reader to rely solely on the visual elements to create a story. Wordless picturebooks connect visual literacy, cultural literacy and concepts of print[36] and through these linkages, support the development of literacy skills (Jalongo et al., 2002: 167).

4.5   THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

As seen in the previous section, the use of wordless picturebooks in classroom situations as well as in literacy programmes abroad has been well documented over the last decade. South Africa offers a unique context for a study on the use of wordless picturebooks. Firstly, South Africa has both 'first' and 'third world' areas coexisting in very close proximity to each other. As such, it faces problems that are associated with both classifications. As a case study, the country comprises a privileged minority that represents the affluent "first world", whereas the majority of the population reside in rural areas

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[36] Concepts of print, according to Holdgreve-Resendez (2010) are a "basic knowledge about how print in general, and books work".

and urban townships that characterises underdeveloped, poor parts of the country, sometimes referred to as the "third world" component of South Africa (Molawa, 2009: 1).

According to an article by Greg Nicholson (2015) of *The Daily Maverick*, an independently owned news, information, analysis and opinion platform, 12 million South Africans live in severe poverty. This is based on a 2015 Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) report. Nicholson summarises:

> Essentially, the latest statistics say that 21.7% of South Africans live in extreme poverty, not being able to pay for basic nutritional requirements; 37% of people don't have enough money to purchase both adequate food items and non-food items so they have to sacrifice food to pay for things like transport and airtime; 53.8% of people can afford enough food and non-food items but fall under the widest definition of poverty in SA, surviving on under R779 per month.

An earlier report in 2010 by Statistics SA indicated that that between 10 and 15 million South Africans live in areas that are characterised by extreme poverty and underdevelopment. Although slightly outdated, a report on Childhood Poverty in South Africa (ACCESS 2002: 2) established that an estimated 11 million children (between the ages of 0 and 18) are living in dire poverty in South Africa, whereas another 14.3 million children were living in poverty.

The above statistics paint a grim picture for South Africa in terms of financial affordability of books, with the majority of the population prioritising food and transport above the 'nice to have', such as reading material for the home. Consequently, many children are not exposed to books or reading before they go to school. In addition to the financial situation highlighted above, another integral aspect that hinders children's early exposure to books is the fact that they have an illiterate parent/primary caregiver.

The following section will explore the South African context for wordless picturebooks, investigating the country's literacy and reading rates, the publishing environment and current studies on South African children's literature. Finally, a discussion of current reading programmes that aim to foster a love for reading will be included.

4.5.1   Literacy and a culture of reading

In an article by Christopher (2010: 113-123), *Literacy Growth and Book Development in Africa: is There Any Relationship?,* the author argues that book reading and publishing are not part of an indigenous culture. The book as a cultural good has yet to ascertain its rightful place on the list of priorities of the government and the population alike. The fact that literacy is still being perceived in its rudimentary definition – namely that of being able to read and write – is a problem that he believes further contributes to the lack of an indigenous reading and publishing culture.

The inability to view books as a "cultural good" is something that Professor M. Brown (Head of Department at the University of Pretoria's English Department) believes is "one of the … legacies of Apartheid" (Brown, 2016). She says that with cultural imperialism comes the sense that books should not be imposed on people, especially considering the new age of orality that we are moving into. Despite this, there is a worldwide trend towards globalisation and within this it becomes impossible to avoid cultural imperialism. Brown is of the opinion that moving too far to the left in resisting European, American, or other perceived foreign cultural forces, there is the risk of making decisions *for* people, as was the policy in respect of black education during the Apartheid era with extremely negative consequences. She states that:

> I think that books are very powerful means of transmitting information. In a society like ours, where there has been a rupture, and where there is a lacuna in the way ideas, narratives, and material are being passed from one generation to the next, the book can work very powerfully to remedy some of that damage. But in order to do that, of course, you have to think about the content of the book (Brown 2016, personal communication, 5 September 2016).

Brown also believes that the book as object is "enormously valuable, and is one of the good things in the world, and I think it is not necessarily purely Western[37]". As a result, aspects of a book that could be considered as damaging, intrusive or culturally alien "… would be books where the content of the book is rooted in a particular culture. But the book as concept I refuse to believe is anything but a good thing".

Answers to the secondary research question, which aims to identify themes that recur when parents and children are given an opportunity to create their own book or tell their own story, can provide insight into which content could be used to generate wordless books locally, and to include communities in the production of these books for future readers.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) details her experience of reading European and American children's books in her celebrated TED talk, *The danger of a single story.* She says that,

> I was also an early writer, and when I began to write, at about the age of seven, stories in pencil with crayon illustrations that my poor mother was obligated to read, I wrote exactly the kinds of stories I was reading. All my characters were white and blue-eyed, they played in the snow, they ate apples, and they talked a lot about the weather, how lovely it was that the sun had come out. Now, this despite the fact that I lived in … We didn't have snow, we ate mangoes, and we never talked about the weather…

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[37]Here she refers to the Timbuktu manuscripts, which were different in that they were in boxes and were not paginated, yet are considered to be books. Eastern cultures such as the Chinese have books, and she is of the opinion that one can argue that books developed with writing in the Middle East, and that the symbolic reckoning that is apparent in visual things like rock art are predecessors of books.

She explains that what she believes her experience points to is how suggestive and vulnerable, especially children, are to stories. Her exposure to books, in which the characters were foreign, had convinced her that all books needed to have foreignness, and all books dealt with topics and included characters with whom she could not personally identify. She also reflects on how much her perception of books changed when she discovered African books, which were more difficult to find, and how she realised that "people like me, girls with skin the colour of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature. I started to write about things I recognised". Much of Adiche's (2009) talk resonates with Brown's (2016) view of the importance of the content of books. The book cannot become a cultural good until its contents are relevant and suitable to the culture in which it needs to establish importance.

In the broader context of Africa, Christopher (2010: 113) writes that "African nations are fully aware that the consequences of illiteracy are detrimental to the achievement of national goals". In a more recent article, *Failure to Launch: Matching Language Policy with Literacy Accomplishment in South African Schools*, Elizabeth Pretorius (2015) argues that the education crisis in South Africa stems largely from a literacy problem. With 18–20% of the country's Gross National Product being spent on education (the highest in Africa), a National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) Report in 2009 (41) found that the academic achievement of learners as a whole "does not match the levels of investment in the school system" (Pretorius, 2015: 47). True literacy development should produce a larger readership and, as a result, increased demands for print material – and it should encourage the creation and publication of assorted reading materials locally (Christopher, 2010: 114).

Official figures, as reported by the South African Book Development Council (SABDC, 2007) show that about 4.7 million adults in South Africa are illiterate, with another 4.9 million adults being functionally illiterate, having left school before Grade 7. Estimates described on FunDza's[38] website report that 4.7 million children in SA are functionally illiterate. The negative impact that this potentially has on their opportunities for success, in addition to their capacity to add positively towards economic development and social cohesion of the country, is severe (FunDza, 2016).

In 2016, a report entitled *Laying Firm Foundations: Getting Reading Right* was released by the Department of Economics at Stellenbosch University. Compiled by Spaull, van der Berg, Wills, Gustafsson and Kotzé, the report investigated the causes of weak South African pupil performance in literacy and numeracy in the foundation phase (Grades 1 to 3), ultimately concluding that weak foundations laid in Grades 1 to 3 comprise one of the major influences that lead to poor educational

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[38] The FunDza Literacy Trust (2016) is a South African non-profit organisation which focuses on improving literacy among teens and young adults.

results in later grades. Outlined in the report is that South Africa is facing a "National Crisis of Reading", with 60% of children who participated in the study being unable to read even an elementary level by the end of Grade 4 (Butler, 2016). The report further highlights that if pupils are not being given sufficient opportunity to "learn to read", they cannot be expected to have the skills that will allow for them to "read to learn". The South African Government assumes that children will have learnt to read by Grade 3, an assumption that was not supported by the report's findings.

Louw and Louw (2014: 176) note that South African children "lag behind" in terms of emergent literacy. They refer to provincial and national assessments by the Department of Basic Education (2011), conducted over the past eight years, that point to a high proportion of South African children who do not obtain basic literacy skills in their initial three years of schools. Another result with regard to South Africa's literacy crisis is that an international review of literacy skills[39] among 9 to 10-year-old children ranked South Africa last of the 40 countries surveyed (Louw & Louw, 2014: 177).

One of the possible reasons for South Africa's current literacy situation that Louw and Louw (2014: 178) explore is the lack of parental involvement. They note that there exists substantial proof that South African children are at a "cognitive-scholastic disadvantage" when compared to most developed, and even developing parts of the world. They write that:

> Research has consistently emphasised the input of adults, especially parents in the cognitive and language development of their children. However, it is estimated that only 10–14% of parents in developing countries such as SA provide cognitively stimulating materials to their children, while only 11–33% of parents actively involve their children in cognitively stimulating activities (Walker et al., 2007).

Due to the influence that cognitive under-stimulation has had, in particular on the developing world, the importance of activities that are cognitively stimulating, for example joint reading, is receiving renewed interest (Vally, 2012, in Louw & Louw, 2014: 178).

Insight into the lack of parental involvement can be found in an article by Inge Wessels, Soraya Lester and Catherine L. Ward in which they write that parents need to be supported in their roles as caregivers, and this should be seen as integral to national development in South Africa (Wessels et al., 2016: 1). The article, entitled, *Engagement in Parenting Programmes; Exploring Facilitators of and Barriers to Participation* provides insight into some of the challenges that parents in South Africa face and how these challenges can affect their parenting capabilities. Many South African parents live in extreme poverty, which can make positive parenting difficult. The overwhelming need to provide basic

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[39] This refers to the *Performance in International Reading Literacy Study*, an international comparative assessment that measures student learning in reading which has been administered every 5 years. 40 countries are included in this assessment, including South Africa, Slovakia, Canada and the Unites States, to name a few (PIRLS, 2016).

necessities, such as food and shelter, often overshadows parenting activities that foster closeness and emotional bonding. Living in neighbourhoods that are prone to incidents of violence and crime also affect parenting in a number of ways, as the stress of keeping their children safe is an added burden to already challenging circumstances. The investigation of two group-based parenting programmes highlighted several structural and personal barriers that prevented parents from attending. They note that "[l]ow socio-economic status appeared to be the most significant overarching structural barrier for parents from both programmes and all sub-groups", with transport being the most commonly mentioned barrier (Wessels et al., 2016: 4). Gaining employment was also a factor that contributed to the non-attendance or as a reason for dropping out of the programmes. Parents said that their working hours were long, and when they did have time off they needed to prioritise household chores and errands. Poor health and lack of access to medical facilities then serves as a barrier to parental involvement (Wessels et al., 2016: 5). The context of the research is discussed in the following chapter and also reflects on the findings of the research. Parental involvement needs to be understood in a holistic manner that takes contextual factors into account. Lack of parental involvement in a child's development subsequently may not equate to a lack of interest, but to the fact that a parent is unable to cope with the adverse conditions in which parenting takes place.

In South Africa, the notion of the Foundation Phase and reading as an area worthy of primary focus is not new, and the South African government has implemented several strategies to try and rectify the current situation. The National Strategy for Reading was part of its response to a study conducted 2001 and 2004 by the Department of Basic Education that established low levels of reading ability across the country. It also found that large numbers of children simply do not read. Underpinning these efforts are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Literacy promotion is at the heart of the MDGs (Department of Education, 2008: 4), part of which is to encourage reading for enjoyment. The National Book Week[40] was established by the Department of Arts and Culture in partnership with the South African Book Development Council in 2010. The campaign proposes that through a collective effort, the country can instil the love of reading and create a reading society in South Africa (Department of Arts and Culture, 2013).

Nobuntu Mpendulo[41] (in Moyo, 2015), the Director for the City of Johannesburg Library and Information Services Directorate, believes that reading interventions before school is a route that

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[40] It was endorsed as an annual reading promotion event in 2010, and in 2013, was reported to have established itself as the leading platform "through which the government, the book sector, the media and the civil society establish dynamic partnerships for the promotion of a culture of reading and writing".

[41] Mpendulo was speaking at an event where 50 early childhood centres received books and toys, the result of a partnership between the City of Johannesburg Library and Information Services and the Biblionef South Africa NGO (Moyo, 2015).

needs to be considered to guarantee better reading results in later phases of children's education. She argues that:

> [i]f we can provide books for children, and get them excited about reading before they reach the foundation phase of the school system, we are guaranteed better results in the later phases. It is also about uplifting the communities, and about the children who will have access to these books, and whose lives will be positively affected.

David Harrison (in Mulgrew, 2012), Chief Executive of the DG Murray Trust[42], notes that "We [South Africa] have massive potholes in the development of our children … After six weeks of age, when children leave the postnatal clinic, they drop into a hole not to be spotted again until grade R".

It is evident that the need to develop a culture of reading has been recognised, to the extent that the cultivation of such a culture has become one of the key imperatives in nation-building (Mahala, 2010: 12) and programmes that attempt to address this have been established by the South African Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Not for Profit Organisational sectors. These initiatives include organisations such as Nal'ibali[43], that fosters the development of reading clubs and parent-child book reading by means of multilingual newspaper supplements. Nal'ibali, isiXhosa for "here's the story", describes itself as a "national reading-for-enjoyment campaign to spark children's potential through storytelling and reading". Nal'ibali is founded on the unassuming logic that a "well-established culture of reading can be a real game-changer for education in South Africa" (Nal'ibali, 2016). Although an in-depth discussion is beyond the scope of this study, other noteworthy programmes include Project Literacy, FunDza Literacy Trust, The Centre for the Book and Book Dash (2016), as well as programmes that promote literacy development, such as Shine.

4.5.2   Reading in the South African home and community

The role of a parent as the child's first educator, the availability of reading material and the home as a micro-environment for learning provide insight into the absence of a reading culture in the South African context. In order for children to view reading as an activity that they can enjoy, they require access to books, occasions to practice reading and continuous motivation to do so. In addition to a strong educational programme, they also need to be exposed to modelling of what skilful and critical reading entails; for example, through a parent who reads with them at home, an older, more knowledgeable sibling or a teacher that initiates storybook reading (Pretorius, 2015: 72). In reality, however, the South African context looks very different.

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[42] The DG Murray Trust is a funding body for literary education and childhood development institutions.
[43] Nal'iBali were involved in this research during the story collection phase (refer to the section on Research Methodology).

A 2007 survey on the customs and opinions of reading, the South African Book Development Council (SABDC) noted that only 14% of South Africans are active readers, and 51% of South African households do not have a single book in their homes. Of the active South African readers, only 5% read books to, or with their children (Department of Basic Education, 2015). The survey also indicated that 1% of South Africans regularly purchases books (Mulgrew, 2012).

In a research paper, *The Literary Environment in Support of Voluntary Reading,* Tiemensma (2008: 51) discusses the South African literary environment. She believes that creating an availability of books in the home is one way to develop a culture of reading. The SABDC survey discovered that the cost of books was one of the main obstacles that restricted reading in every identified demographic: 45% of those interviewed were of the opinion that books were too expensive (Mulgrew, 2012). Many South African families cannot afford to purchase school books for their children, let alone books meant for enjoyment. An obvious link exists between illiteracy and poverty, whereas literacy and economic prosperity are generally connected (Mahala, 2010: 12). Pollard-Durodola's (2015: 8-9) research indicates that children's language abilities and conceptual knowledge are related to their life experiences, which in turn are heavily directed by their socio-economic status (SES) and their families' parenting practices. Living in poverty can severely limit children's access to high quality early child care, stimulating educational resources and varied print materials, such as books and magazines, in the home.

Other significant results from the survey (Mulgrew, 2012) conclude that 27% said that they do not read due to not having access to a nearby library[44]. Libraries – in schools or communities – play an integral role in nurturing a culture of reading (Dwayne et al. 2011: 7) and can further support parents who are unable to afford books by aiding the distribution of books to their homes, should they have access to a library. Consequently, the limited access to books has implications for the development of a reading culture. As Magona (in Mulgrew 2012) notes: "Just as you can't fall in love with someone you haven't met, we can't raise children who are readers if they do not meet books." A study by Nassimbeni and Desmond (2011) investigated the availability of books as a factor in reading and educational behaviour in disadvantaged primary schools in South Africa. After the donation of books to schools in areas considered as "print poor environments," the authors reported a "rise in the level of enjoyment, motivation to read, and interest in books was reported in most schools after the donation" (Nassimbeni & Desmond, 2011: 95-101).

Tiemensma's (2008: 57) paper further points to a study conducted by the Belfield Reading Project in which parents who were uninvolved in their children's reading development were adversely affected

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[44]Equal Education (n.d) found that 92% of public schools that do not have functional libraries.

by a combination of factors; amongst others, unemployment, health issues, financial difficulties and a lack of access to reading materials in the home. Other parents did not place any significant value on literacy and may have been uninformed with regard to supporting their child's literacy development. In these cases, although money is available, it is not spent on reading materials for the home. The role of the parent as perceived by schools has drastically changed over last few years, with family involvement in a child's education being extensively recognised as a fundamental element in effective schooling. However, many parents still do not think that they have an educational responsibility once the child goes to school (Cruikshank, in Tiemensma, 2008: 62). Family engagement, also referred to as family involvement, according to Smith, Kuzin, De Pedro and Wohlstetter (n.d.: 5), includes a range of activities that not only take part at a child's school, but extend to the home environment and the community. After reviewing over 80 studies, Henderson and Mapp (2002, in Elish-Piper, 2015: 55) concluded that family engagement contributed to students' literacy achievement, regardless of family income, parental level of education or ethnicity. Additionally, their reviews indicated that children from low-income homes with low parental education levels, were the group most impacted by family engagement activities.

These findings highlight the potential that family reading programmes have to address the lack of a culture of reading, provided they have access to appropriate books and are supported. A local example of a programme that is presently attaining much success in this area is a training programme recently piloted in Khayelitsha, a township in the Western Cape. Cooper, Murray, Vally and Tomlinson (2013), in their paper *Mother-infant Booksharing: Stellenbosch University Shares Their Implementation Experience,* note that the findings of their pilot programme indicated that parents/caregivers in communities like Khayelitsha were receptive to the idea of receiving booksharing training and were interested in it as a novel way in which they could facilitate their child's development. Caregivers in the study who received training improved their booksharing skills and became more sensitive and responsive to their children (infants). Nassimbeni and Desmond's (2011: 97) study also noted that in a pilot project that they had conducted in four rural primary schools, the insufficient training of teachers and principals in the use and value of books for voluntary reading was attributed to the low impact that the books had. Consequently, informing people of *how* to use books becomes important when looking at fostering a culture of reading in the South African context.

However, Du Plessis (2016) is of the opinion that most South Africans see reading and books as synonymous with an academic exercise or obligation. In addition to this, parents who do not have a reading culture of their own often see reading only in relation to its educational purposes (Tiemensma, 2008: 61). Nassimbeni and Desmond's (2011: 101) findings echo this sentiment, with the reaction of participants – both adults (teachers) and children – regarding the value of reading being

"overwhelmingly framed in utilitarian terms: the acquisition of knowledge, the development of skills related to reading and writing, the passing of examinations". The children's view of reading echoed that of their teacher, with quotes such as reading "makes us clever", "helps us learn" and "gives us knowledge" being common responses.

Locally, there is little awareness regarding the value of reading for personal and career development. Children are subsequently not exposed to modelling behaviours in which their parents read as a leisure activity, and often do not experience parent-child joint reading before starting school. The high levels of illiteracy discussed earlier, as well as the shortage of context-specific reading materials in indigenous languages lead to the fact that reading for pleasure is less likely to be a habitual practice within the South African home (Du Plessis, in Van Heerden, 2008).

From an academic point of view, Brown (2016, personal communication, 5 September 2016), believes that the study of children's literature in South Africa is "marginalised". She says:

> Children's literature is taught to some degree in the education faculties, but it is largely seen as the property of education faculties, where it tends to be taught in connection with teaching reading. Consequently, there is quite an instrumental view of books and literature in that they are seen as "sweeteners", as things that can be used to get children to develop literacy. There is little broader attention to what the books might be able to contribute to the child's development, to their sense of the world, to other things that stories tell us.

Brown further points to a lack of units of childhood studies that are available in the South African context, and notes that "people who are interested in children's literature tend to be quite isolated and often made to feel odd in their context". In the preface to *Creating Books for the Young in the New South Africa*, Elwyn Jenkins (2014: 3) echoes Brown's sentiment that South African children's and youth literature warrants more serious academic attention. He notes that while a number of South African authors of youth literature have been included in various international and local publications, they have been "scattered and short", and there is a general lack of academic literature available on the topic.

Brown (2016) is of the opinion that that the current status of children's literature is problematic:

> We are in a very uncomfortable space in that prior to mass urbanisation, I think a storytelling culture still existed quite strongly; so while the story wasn't linked to literacy, children were still getting stories; they were still entering imaginative spaces where they could deal with issues or think about morality or living in an abstract sense which I believe was very useful. But what we found was that as people urbanise, and with the best of intentions, they want their children to be modern and to progress, and perhaps because they also lose contact also with grandparents in rural areas, the storytelling doesn't happen. In addition, parents quite often also have poor literacy levels and did not experience childhood books themselves, children are thus coming into schools with no experience of narrative, quite aside from reading. And therefore it is particularly crucial

that the teacher should have an experience of children's books, and an awareness of them that is
not only related to the acquisition of literacy.

As discussed earlier in this study, households that are rich in literary activities facilitate a more positive outlook on books and reading in general. Tiemensma (2008: 51, 60) suggests that parental participation in reading activities can sometimes be more significant in developing a culture of reading than other variables such as social class or the level of parental education. Parents who consider reading as being important will generally influence their children to feel the same (Tiemensma 2008: 51, 60). However, in order to achieve these, the parents must establish these habits themselves.

Family literacy is a term used to describe the use of literacy within family systems (The National Adult Literacy Agency {NALA}, 2004: 9). Palmer, Leiste, James and Ellis (2000: 93) write that the family literacy movement emphasises respect for diversity and the cultural heritage of participants. This approach supports the learning which occurs in the home and in communities, while trying to overcome barriers between learning in different contexts. The National Adult Literacy Agency (2004: 9), provides insight as to how parents who, for various reasons, had their own education limited, can be supported, while striving to develop both children's and adults' literacy learning. This approach is particularly relevant in the South African context, where there are 11 official languages that characterise a variety of different cultures, each with their own heritage, practices and beliefs.

4.5.3   Mother tongue and African centric approaches in reading

With the consideration of the cultural appropriateness of literacy programmes, comes the consideration of culturally appropriate reading material for families to make use of in their homes. This includes language considerations. South Africa has 11 official languages, and producing economically viable, but relevant reading material in all 11 languages has proved challenging to the South African publishing industry. In spite of the acceptance of the principle of language education in the mother tongue language, not much progress has been made with the implementation thereof. Le Cordeur (2014) states:

> The principle that children should be taught in their mother tongue for at least the first six years
> of their schooling life, is universally acknowledged. But sadly, twenty years on from our birth as
> the 'rainbow nation', we have still not resolved the issues that hamper delivery of mother tongue
> instruction to primary school children across South Africa.

The predominant language of instruction in South Africa is English, with a diminishing number of schools that have Afrikaans as a language of instruction. ISAL speakers therefore remain disadvantaged in this regard. Boakye (2015: 137) writes that:

> [e]ven from Grades R-3 where instruction is officially to take place in the home language (HL), a number of schools use English for various reasons (De Klerk, 2002; Jansen, 2013). …. In addition to being disadvantaged at school, the ISAL students may also have experienced literacy interactions that are not congruent with the school literacy practices. This mismatch between home and school literacies may negatively affect students' learning and reading practices (Niven, 2005; Taylor & Yu, 2009).

Professor Thabisile Buthelezi (in Cook 2013), states that the implementation of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) policy has been sluggish due to setbacks, especially at the foundation phase. These setbacks include parents perceiving that schools where the LOLT is English have a higher status and would therefore be more beneficial to their children's education. Limited resources and teachers who are not skilled to teach in mother tongue languages present further major challenges.

In the earlier discussion on changing perspectives of literacy, Rogers et al. (1999) pointed out that literacy is a social practice and forms part of a wider set of 'communicative practices'. Naomi Boakye (2015: 134) of the University of Pretoria investigates the social element of reading and literacy development in South Africa, and notes that the new plurality of literacies includes literacy in diverse contexts. The notion of social literacies incorporates the "social beliefs, values and conventions that define literacy practices in particular contexts (Street, 1997)" (Boakye 2015: 134). Undoubtedly, social issues then need to be considered as relevant in children's [and families'] reading development (Boakye, 2015: 136).

Heath (1983, 2001, in Boakye 2015: 135) documents research on socio-economic status (SES) and language communities. Her studies demonstrate how the use of literacy in homes differs from one language community to another and also notes differing practices in families with dissimilar SES. Her study found that the black working class communities, comprising low SES families, were less attentive to written texts, but were accomplished in oral storytelling. Rich storytelling, imaginative analogy and metaphors were important to this community. Within a similar SES, the white community in Heath's study were religious and focused more on written scriptures. Heath's study also indicates that there are notable differences in literacy practices between different SES households.

There seems to be a general lack of reading and learning materials in indigenous languages after the foundation phase, arguably due to the materials being considered too expensive to produce (Louw & Louw, 2014; 246). Dr Carole Bloch (in Cook, 2013), director at The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA), notes that for many years, the tendency has been to have children learn in their mother tongue for the first three years of their schooling, after which African language-speaking children are required to switch to English as a language of learning. She adds that global research has indicated that children are unable to fully learn a language within three years, with the suggestion that children should spend their first six years at school learning in a language that they

know well. English can simultaneously be introduced as a subject and can gradually be extended to a co-teaching medium, allowing for children to experience the best of both worlds and learn from a solid foundation (Bloch, in Cook, 2013). However, the discontinuation of mother tongue learning after Grade 3 is still happening in South Africa, despite the fact that the South African Constitution supports and promotes a culture of multilingualism (Bloch, in Cook, 2013).

Referring specifically to the South African context, Edwards and Ngwaru (2012: 125) write that:

> It is widely believed that one of the consequences of the heavy reliance on materials that have little or no relevance for everyday life is that very few children are equipped or motivated to read either for pleasure or information by the end of formal schooling … Developing an understanding of the most effective ways of promoting a culture of reading is thus an important priority.

Professor Brown (2016) states that it has become the practice in the relatively more literate cultures (for example English and Afrikaans children in the South African context) that by the end of Grade 3, children move to Easy Readers; books with half a page of print and a picture, which "draws them away from the dependency on the image to reading more text". Yet, the acquisition of literacy, also noted by Block (in Cook 2013), is very slow and requires that children remain motivated to read (and learn to read). By changing the medium of instruction to English, literacy acquisition is further complicated. Just as a child learns to read a relatively easy book in their mother tongue, they are confronted by a book in English. Consequently, a child may be "defeated by the language", without ever experiencing the pleasure of reading (Brown, 2016). Parents also opt to prepare their child for the world by choosing schools in which English is the primary language of instruction, as English is viewed as the language of "commerce and upward social mobility" (Louw & Louw, 2014: 246). Home language education is a right for South African children, but the reality of this is often very different than the desired outcomes.

The importance of culturally appropriate reading material can also be viewed from a student-centred learning (SCL), also referred to as child-centred learning or learner-centred education. This is an approach to education which prioritises the needs, abilities, interests and learning styles. As a teaching method, SCL views the student voice as fundamental to the learning experience (Sue, 2009). Curriculum design making use of this approach emphasises interactivity and local content, and as Sue (2009) argues, when a student can relate to what is being taught, he or she is more likely to participate in the learning experience and to retain new information. The independence and responsibility that learners experience in SCL further helps to cultivate characteristics of lifelong learners. The SABDC (2013) has taken steps towards creating more material in South Africa's official languages through the Indigenous Language Publishing Project (ILPP), which they are hopeful will address the cultural and economic challenges in the book sector and encourage new markets to be explored. Yet, considering

the economic costs in producing books in 11 languages, as well as the emphasis on storytelling in some of the low SES communities (Boakye, 2015: 135), the researcher is of the view that wordless picturebooks can serve as a medium to effectively address both issues.

Wordless books require the reader to tell the story and in a book sharing situation, this often involves verbalising the story through talk. Without words to tie down a language, readers can speak in a language of their choice. Louw and Louw (2014: 246) note that research has continually suggested the significance of mother tongue, or home language, instruction at school. Stephen Krashen (2004, in Grundvig, 2012: 14) has established that reading skills acquired in the first language, or mother tongue, can be transferred to a second language, a sentiment echoed by Louw and Louw (2014: 246). When learners need to learn in a language that is not their home language, their academic achievement is undermined due to the difficulty they experience in learning in another language. This can be understood as one explanation for South African children's poor performance in the previously mentioned literacy assessments (Louw & Louw, 2014: 246). Krashen's fundamental proposal is that children will learn English much more effectively if they continue to develop their mother tongue language while developing their second language (Grunvig, 2012: 14). Wordless picturebooks can be used in the home and at school; in both mother tongue and the English language; by parents, regardless of their literacy levels; and by older siblings and other family members to stimulate language development, while simultaneously harnessing the storytelling potential of the books.

4.5.4   Storytelling

Sara Muller (2012), in an article featured on Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa's (PRAESA) blog writes that "we still hear echoes of the oral storytelling tradition of different groups of South Africans when we hear praise singers performing". Palmer et al. (2000: 93) believe that the art of storytelling is an excellent way to promote and enhance language and literacy development within families. Storytelling has been identified as an essential component in a sample of successful family literacy programmes across the United States. From the earliest times to today's age of television series and podcasts, people have enjoyed stories. Mlandu and Bester (1997: 199) refer to Olen's (1990: 386) recommendation that storytelling by parents, caregivers, librarians and teachers is one of the best techniques to expose children to literacy. Storytelling exchanges are a reciprocal process that allows children the opportunity to tell their own stories. Wordless picturebooks facilitate this through visual prompts, found in the illustrations, construction of the book and the process of turning pages. During the storytelling process, children are given a chance to cultivate their oral language and to practice speaking to nonthreatening people, such as their family or groups of other children. Consequently, occasions like this also help to develop self-esteem

(Hennings, 2000, in Palmer et al., 2000: 93). Children and adults alike can express themselves creatively and theatrically through an active participation in storytelling. In telling their own stories, reasoning and thinking abilities are being further developed as meaning is constructed. If stories are written down, the reading-writing connection is reinforced again as children read their own stories (Palmer et al,. 2000: 98).

The greatest asset that storytelling offers when viewed as an educational tool is arguably its ability to create a bridge between community and school. Palmer et al. (2000: 98) write that "[s]torytelling allows children to draw on resources from their homes and communities", meeting one of the requirements of family literacy programmes, namely the employment of methods that correspond with the culture of the community and that educate children as to how language is used within their community (Bloome, Katz, Solsken, Willet & Wilson-Keenan, 2000, in Palmer et al. 2000: 98). Storytelling facilitates this within family settings, which are generally low risk environments that allow for children to discover language with little anxiety or criticism (Vacca, Vacca & Gove, 2000, in Palmer et al. 2000: 101).

People also simply *enjoy* stories, which can make reading a book that harnesses storytelling and creation pleasant. Jonathan Gottschall, in his book, *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (2012: 50), writes that "[t] he human mind was shaped for story so that it could be shaped by story". He refers to recent studies in neuroscience, which found that when humans read a book or watch a movie, bodily representations of emotions experienced by the protagonist – for example, disgust – are activated. Consequently, the reader/viewer perceives that they are literally "feeling" what the protagonist is experiencing or going through.

Fiction is about conflict and many of the problems observed in fiction correspond to those we face in reality and fiction, or stories, allow us to have rich experiences without the risks of facing the consequences or dangers of them (Gottschall, 2012: 50). Stories then can also be viewed as a way for people to make sense of the world around them. Engel (2016) writes that storytelling is arguably the most powerful manner in which humans consolidate experience.

Children are naturally drawn to story. Gottschall (2012: 27) writes that "[f]or children, make-believe is as automatic and as insuppressible as their dreams. Children pretend even when they do not have enough to eat; even when they live in squalor". Pretend play has been linked to storytelling and narrative by Engel (2016), who refers to Bruner's (1986) proposal that early play activities and habits of young children have grammatical structure embedded in them. She argues that in the same manner, the elements of storytelling are contained in the play scenarios of toddlers, even when children do not "narrate their play" – they are enacting a narrative using gestures (Engel, 2016).

Narrative skills need to be learned by children who, in their early years, are unable to form stories or accounts of events that they have experienced without assistance from their parents. As they get older, they become more skilled, learning to use linguistic features that are appropriate to narratives; for example, past tense or present tense. At the age of three, children are generally able to produce understandable personal stories, with a beginning, a high point and a conclusion. These stories also include a description of the environment or context of the event. Children develop their skills as narrators of fictitious stories which are based on stories they have heard from books or media or events that they have personally experienced (Smith, Cowie & Blades, 2011: 419). Kelly and Baily (2013: 428-429) indicate that the predominant co-constructed narratives which children tell with a parent or peer are factual accounts of past events (citing Preece, 1987), "typically in the form of episodic, event-based narratives" (Kelly & Baily, 2013: 428). Narrative ability occurs in a developmental continuum between the ages of 3 and 9 years old. Retelling stories is a means for children to become familiar with the convention of written stories. This provides a framework for help with reading. Parents play an integral part in making stories enjoyable and sharing experiences, so that children can have a positive association with narrative by the time they start to read independently (Smith et al., 2003: 361).

Stories also act as a "cooling vessel" (Bruner, in Engel, 2016) in that "emotionally and cognitively powerful experiences can be reconstructed with less impact than they originally had". Peggy Miller's (in Engel 2016) study of families discussing the past, indicated that children frequently conveyed distressing experiences to their parents. Consequently, storytelling can also be a cathartic experience. In the South African context, where families in lower socio-economic communities are often affected by violence, crime and other issues related to extreme poverty, storytelling can serve as a means to "debrief" children and parents from traumatic experiences. "Children tell stories as a way of solving emotional, cognitive and social puzzles and to sort out problems or concerns" (Engel, 2016). In the following chapter, the Context of the Research, the legacy of Apartheid, persisting inequalities and poverty are discussed in depth. However, it is important to note here that telling stories about the past could serve as a means to heal old wounds and to establish a sense of pride in the past for different cultural groups. Harold Scheub (in Dialla-Ogamba, 2012) uncovers the history of South Africa through an investigation of storytellers and their confrontation of Apartheid and violence by means of storytelling in his book, *The Uncoiling Python: South African Storytellers and Resistance*. In his review of the book, Dialla-Ogamba (2012) writes:

> Even though apartheid has ended in South Africa, it is important to continue to tell stories of various aspects of the history of South Africa in order for people to learn the involvement of different people that make up the country before and during the Apartheid regime.

Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992: 6, in Wielenga, 2012) contend that critically thinking of and grappling with our stories is essential for "emancipation". Often, people's stories are formed in struggles with or against other stories. With regard to the South African society and its tumultuous history, Balcomb, (2000, in Wielenga, 2012) asserts that the prevalent narratives were destructive. As a means to create new stories and to perceive reality in new ways, those stories need to be "shattered". This process brings into question our preconceived ideas and stereotypes and allows for the emergence of new stories that create commonalities for understanding one another, and consequently behaving in ways that are less destructive and more inclusive.

Writing on the moral of story, Gottschall (2012: 137-138) writes that "story … continues to fulfil its ancient function of binding society by reinforcing a set of common values and strengthening the ties of common culture". The value of storytelling, beyond the focus on literacy development, is clear. Engel (2016) concludes her article by saying that stories not only teach children about their culture, but additionally serve as a "kind of passport" into that culture.

Stories need not come from books alone; many communities have a thriving practice of oral stories[45] (Engel, 2016). Kudakwashe Tuwe (2016: 3) writes about African Storytelling, stating that the method's uniqueness lies in its distinct capacity to "provide entertainment, to satisfy the curiosities of the African people and to teach and impact important moral lessons about everyday life" (Tuwe, 2016: 3). Important elements of storytelling include rhythm and gesture as well as repetition of language, where storytellers repeat words and phrases, making it easy to understand and recall stories from memory.

When using picturebooks as a means of storytelling with children, Radebe (in Morris, 2007: 33) argues that illiterate parents may be overwhelmed by the text in picturebooks, but adds that they are able to create a narrative via the contextual clues of the visual story and in this way, still share a rich experience with the child. On the other hand, illiterate parents may not be certain of how to simply start the story telling process with their child (Lacher, Nichols & May, 2005: 59). Wordless picture books could be used as an aid for the unsure parent to begin telling a story. Arbuckle (2004: 446) states:

> [P]ictures in print materials attract readers by capturing their attention. This is of particular value when the audience may be reluctant readers or readers who may be intimidated or put off by expanses of unbroken text, such as readers with limited education.

Brown (2016) asserts that despite a lack of written narrative, the illustrations in wordless picturebooks still present a strong implied narrative. She notes that "in a country like ours, where we have such a

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[45]For the purposes of this study however, we refer to storytelling with the use of books as a means to stimulate a love for, and a culture of reading, and consequently the focus is on this rather than solely oral storytelling.

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large number of languages to deal with, and perhaps illiterate or semi-literate caregivers or parents, I think wordless picturebooks can be very powerful; especially if they are bright and pleasing". However, despite the fact that these books can be used in the South African context, Brown (2016) believes that some readers will still require support:

> One thinks in wordless picturebooks you are taking the need to read out of the equation, and it isn't as simple as that, because the whole act of looking at the book, of turning the pages, of deducing meaning from a two dimensional representation, those are fundamental reading skills. And if people are illiterate, they might not have those either, so I think there needs to be support.

In conclusion, the South African home and community landscape poses several challenges in creating a culture of reading. Socio-economic factors, family history and education all have an impact on the lack of reading culture currently found in the country. It was proposed that wordless books could be a tool that can overcome some of these issues. However, very few of these books are produced in the South African publishing industry. The next section investigates the South African publishing industry with regard to the production and use of wordless books within a South African context, with consideration of the views of both publishers and illustrators.

4.5.5   The production and use of wordless picturebooks in South Africa

There seem to be very few locally produced picture books available in South Africa, with the majority being imported from American or European markets[46]. This is not surprising, given the discussion on the availability of African language books earlier.

Many of the wordless books that were located during the researcher's search are specifically aimed at the classroom situation[47]. However, within South Africa, it is necessary to recognise the significance of local relevance of picturebooks and to allow for the educational level of the child Is the child advanced enough to decode graphic devices like motion blurs and character actions?), as well as physical and cultural elements (using snow to express seasonal changes in a region with a moderate climate like South Africa may confuse the reader) (Johnson, 2009: 98). Books labelled as "educational" can also be used in the home and for joint reading. Van Heerden's (2008) notion of relying on books that are produced into a "strictly educational" fashion comes into play here. The researcher agrees

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[46] An online search, as well as a search of local libraries and bookstores was conducted. A search of reading organisations in South Africa was also conducted to determine if the use of wordless books was advocated in their reading programmes at all.
[47] An online search resulted in the following examples: READ's Picture Story Packs (1995), which contain a series of eight full-colour posters that can be read without words. These usually included a teacher's guide and a list of specific outcomes that had been outlined for each interaction with the book/poster (Le Roux, 2012: 38-39). Kwa Zulu Natal's Department of Education (2014) includes the Oxford Reading Tree Stage 1 Wordless Stories (a Pack of 6) in their Learning and Teaching Support Material catalogue. On further investigation, these again seem to be stories about white, middle class families and do not have any real connection with the lives of lower SES black families. Oxford University Press also have the Storie boom series available as an Afrikaans version of the Story Tree series. The 2003 print includes a teacher's guide for Phase 1 (in Afrikaans) by Ansie du Toit.

that creating work that can be read purely for pleasure is necessary to challenge the current view that reading and story creation are for purely educational outcomes. Educational books that have teacher's guides and learner workbooks fall into this category. This risk also extends to the illustrator, who needs to be allowed to cultivate his or her talent by creating in a way that is quite different from the standard approach in developing learning materials[48].

The South African output of wordless books leans heavily on being "educational" when compared to international standards. They also lack diversity. This may be expected, considering the discussion regarding illiteracy and current attempts to alleviate the situation. It should be noted that the educational system has the potential to provide the most efficient methods of distributing these kinds of books and thus it is to be expected that the distributers would prefer to produce and view them as pedagogic material. Yet, when looking at the Caldecott medal winners, such as *Flotsam* and *The Lion and the Mouse*, the sense of magic these books can provide is clearly lost – from an imaginative point of view, as well as the visual attraction. These books exhibit the expressive power of the image and its ability to convey an array of meaning, emotion and to question its readers.

The following section will give a brief overview of locally produced wordless books that have been identified[49]. Books used for this study included:

- *Abongi's Journey* (2004) by Kerry Saadien-Raad and Tania Rosser

- *A Very Nice Day* (2006), illustrated by Natalie Hinrichsen with concept by Anne Walton

- *Max* (2010) by Warwick Goldswain

- *One Starry Night* (2011) by Geoff Walton

- *The Rainbow Birds* (2001) by Piet Grobler

- *The Swimming Pool* (2002) by Fiona Beal (Author), Karen Engeldow (Illustrator)

The majority of these books still fall strictly under an educational label in that they are published by educational publishers or included in their catalogues, but they were deemed appropriate for the research in that they did not contain workbooks or other specific learning related outcomes.

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[48] From personal experience, being commissioned to create illustrations for educational material usually comes with a strict brief on style and representation. This is of course reasonable for the purpose that the books are used for, but the researcher is in agreement with Van Heerden's (2008) statement in that the illustrator loses a sense of personal style in meeting brief requirements.

[49] The research does not include books which were extremely difficult to locate, or for which information is not readily available. The motivation behind this decision was that if people are unable to locate the books, they will not be able to purchase or use them in their home.

A Very Nice Day (2006), illustrated by Natalie Hinrichsen with concept by Anne Walton, is part of the First Words in Print series (Figure 2.11). The First Words in Print (FWIP) project, or Isiqalo ('the start' or 'the beginning') originated in 2000 when the Centre for the Book (CFB), in collaboration with the Nordic Council of Ministers, arranged a workshop during which the dire need for children ages zero to five in South Africa to have access to books was discussed. The workshop reached consensus that books need to be directly provided to children in order to arouse a curiosity in books as objects of pleasure and entertainment. The need to foster the notion that books could be shared in a variety of ways in the home, instead of simply being an educational tool, was also identified. It was noted that at the time, there were practically no indigenous South African books created with very young children in mind. It was identified that children needed books that reflected the reality of their daily lives and groups of children in urban and rural environments. The workshop committed to introduce the FWIP project, which resulted in 14 books produced, two of which were wordless (National Library of South Africa, 2012). *A Very Nice Day* (2006) was discussed earlier in this paper (refer Chapter 3) and was used in the research. It presents a visual narrative of a little girl as she goes about her day, getting dressed, going to the shops and returning home to make a meal; it is based in atypically South African milieu with the character in the story being a young African girl.

Max (2010), by Warwick Goldswain, has a slightly more advanced narrative, being classified as suited for children aged three to five as a first step in learning to read, using illustrations only. It has been made available for download online. The story is about Max, a young, very lazy cheetah who likes to sit and watch television all day. A character that one can assume might be Max's mother eventually sends him outside to play, clearly angry at his laziness. Max is confronted with a situation in which another character needs his help, and he becomes the hero of the story.

The Swimming Pool (2002) (Figure 4.1) by Fiona Beal (Author), with Karen Engeldow (Illustrator) is included in the *Star Stories* series by Juta publishers. It is about a family spending their day by a swimming pool. The relevance issue can be argued once again with this book: lower SES families would not have access to a pool, and subsequently the book has little relevance to their daily lives. Due to a shortage of books, this book was used in the study, with only one participant pair reading it (as discussed in the findings).

The Rainbow Birds (2001) by Piet Grobler (Figure 2.14), Geoff Walton's *One Starry Night* (2011) (Figure 4.4) and *Abongi's Journey* (2004) by Kerry Saadien-Raad and Tania Rosser are wordless books in Masker Miller Longmans *(MML) Stars of Africa* reading series. They are classified in the Stories section of the R-1 reading level. The illustrations are mostly in colour and are set in urban and rural areas all over South Africa. MML (2007) describes them as "[a]bout Africa for children in Africa". *Abongi's Journey* is also included in the FWIP series and was nominated for the 2002 SACBF Vivian Wilkes

Award. The book tracks the journey of an African boy, who pushes his wire car from one landscape to another, varying from rural to city. At the end of the day, he is swept up in his mother's arms. Abongi encounters various types of transport and each double-page spread includes a visual clue to the next spread, thus ensuring continuity. Another book in the *Stars of Africa* series that is wordless but is classified as an "information" book is *1,2,3* (2001) (Figure 4.3) by Diek Grobler. In this picture book, a visit to the zoo allows children to count all the animals they see. Numeracy is cleverly introduced through beautifully illustrated and amusing images.

Despite the *Stars of Africa* series providing a separate series for "stories" within the predominantly educational series, an online search found that the majority of these books are also classified as "readers" or educational[50]. Grobler's *Rainbow birds* is significantly different from the educational formula, as he uses his characteristic emotive illustrations and variation of colour to communicate the story. *Abongi's Journey* too functions more like a storybook than an educational reader. The Maskew Miller Longman series, however, includes a diversity of styles with more complex narratives and provides readers with a wider variety of reading experiences. These books comprise the most diverse selection of readily available wordless books that can be used to encourage reading for pleasure that this research has found to date. It should be noted that these books are promoted as being for very young readers, a factor that could perpetuate the misconception that wordless picturebooks are not of serious literary value and should be used only with very young children when their value extends to older children and adults alike.

South Africa falls short of offering the type and variety in the genre that is found overseas. As previously mentioned, wordless picturebooks are increasingly being acknowledged in the international space. Online, there is an increasing number of articles and reviews where the latest wordless books are recommended to readers (School Library Journal, 2015; Goodreads, n.d.).

4.5.6   Studies on illustrations and wordless picturebooks in the South African context

There is also very little written about the use of wordless books in reading programmes. *The Language of Pictures: Visual Literacy and Print Materials for Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)* by Katherine Arbuckle (2004: 445-448) is the one of the few articles that investigates the use of illustrations[51] as a singular means of communication, albeit from an educational viewpoint. Arbuckle, an artist and illustrator herself, investigates visual literacy and issues that underlie the skill to read

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[50]These sites includeTakealot.com (2016), Loot.co.za (2016) and also catalogues provided by publishers and distributors such as Maskew Miller Longman (2007). Some sites refer to the learning content of the book.

[51] The study refers specifically to illustrations. Often literacy programmes will encourage parents to use pictures from magazines to create stories. These have not been included in the study as the focus is on illustrated books.

pictures. Arbuckle writes that illustrations not only supply motivation to read, but can help readers become more interested in and involved with reading if "familiar objects and situations, which may elicit emotion in the reader, are depicted". She also references Stefano's (2004) study which found that small-scale farmers in KwaZulu-Natal preferred print that was accompanied by illustrations, some of them commenting that "Pictures are good", "It is easy to understand the pictures", and "When I see the picture I become interested in the story and read about it" (Stefano, 2004, in Arbuckle, 2004: 446). Her article acknowledges the role of multiliteracies and explores scenarios in which pictures have been misunderstood. This has important implications for the South African illustrator hoping to create a narrative solely using pictures.

Sandra Land & Zanele Buthelezi's (2005: 440) article focuses on a dual language (Zulu and English) picture story based on a fictional character, a Zulu man called uMkhize. The story is published weekly and depicts the adventures and misadventures of a resident of Pietermaritzburg. The authors describe the readers' response to this story as an example of the comic genre. They evaluate new readers' engagement with this story, with particular focus on the strategy used in this comic to "stimulate enjoyment of reading and to foster the development of reading and skills". Although not wordless, the study indicated that an observation of new readers interacting with the comic highlighted that readers could use their understanding of pictures and the clues they contain in an illustrated story to understand the meaning of unfamiliar printed words (English or Zulu) (Land & Buthelezi, 2004: 440). An interesting aspect to note in this comic strip is that it is "instilling an enjoyment of reading in its low-literate readers" through the meaningful engagement by the reader with the contents of the comic.

Research, specifically on a wordless picturebook, was found in FWIP baseline study by Angela Schaffer and Kathy Watters (2003). *Abongi's Journey* was included in this study, as it was used in part of the FWIP project run by the Centre for the Book[52]. The report looked specifically at the effectiveness of the delivery model and strategy used for the programme, and assessed the extent to which the books reached the target recipients. Furthermore, and of interest in this research, the report investigated the manner in which the books were used by participants and includes a brief outline of how readers responded to the different books. *Abongi's Journey* was the only wordless picturebook included in the study and elicited a clearly different response when compared to the books with text. Schaffer and Watters (2003: 12) write that "[m]any caregivers stated they had not understood *Abongi's Journey* as

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[52]The Centre for the Book is an outreach unit of the National Library of South Africa. Its mission is to promote a culture of reading, writing and publishing in local languages and easy access to books for all.

there were no words. More confident caregivers, usually ECD [Early Childhood Development] educators, expressed excitement about how the book could be used to stimulate storytelling and the child's imagination". Not only is this an exciting finding in terms of the book being positively received by caregivers, but also indicates that wordless picturebooks may need to be introduced to readers who are encountering the genre for the first time. Consequently, one cannot assume that because a book does not contain text, it will be easier to use.

Twanette Acker's (2012) research investigates narrative development in South African children aged five to nine. She highlights the correlation between narrative skills and later academic success, with specific reference to reading and writing abilities. Her study deemed the use of a wordless picturebook as appropriate for the South African context, as a means to elicit a narrative from each participant. The use of wordless picturebooks as a locally relevant and important assessment tool is a noteworthy aspect of her study with regard to this research, as Acker found that normative based assessment materials are limited in South Africa. Further, due to the complex nature of narratives and the influence of socio-economic, linguistic and cultural factors, materials that were commercially available were generally deemed unsuitable.

Le Roux (2012) investigated the use or wordless picturebooks in parent-child reading in a case study conducted in the Kayamandi township, located just outside Stellenbosch. The empirical study aimed to better understand how these books would function in joint reading by a child and a parent/primary caregiver. The research findings indicate that wordless picturebooks can be used as an effective intervention for fostering a culture of reading by facilitating joint parent-child reading practices, and for the activity to be carried out in the home. The research was, however, conducted in a setting that was arranged by the researcher; thus no conclusions could be reached on how the books would actually function within the home.

4.6   CONCLUSION

Tiemensma (2008: 62) draws attention to the enormous challenge that South Africa is facing in terms of promoting reading at home. The socio-economic circumstances of many families put children at risk of not experiencing the pleasure of reading books with their parents. Increased focus on the factors that motivate children to read and on those social and cultural factors that are barriers to reading is needed to address and resolve what at the moment is being referred to as a "crisis of reading". In a paper written as early as 1992, Overduin (1992: 12 writes):

> The message of this paper is that children's books can have a pertinent, positive influence on the
> life and behaviour of children in a multicultural society if this coincides with a healthy, humane

social order. South Africa is taken as an example, but the implications stretch far beyond one specific country. It is hoped that children's books in South Africa will form a bridge between children of different cultures in a country that prepares itself for a new democratic, non-racial and just society).

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters contextualised wordless picturebooks and provided a theoretical grounding for the research through a social semiotic and multimodal discussion of the genre. South Africa's "crisis of reading" (Spaul et al., 2016) and lack of local reading culture was explored relative to the home and community as reading and learning environment, and the role of the parent as a child's first educator and a reading role model. The availability of appropriate and relevant reading material in South Africa was discussed, specifically with reference to the importance of mother tongue language education. Dismal socio-economic conditions, a lack of reading in the home and a shortage of context-specific reading material in indigenous languages were identified as factors that prevent reading for pleasure becoming a habitual practice within the South African home. In this chapter, the context of the research is discussed, followed by a description of the research methodology that was employed for the practical component of this study.

By way of introduction, it is appropriate to restate the primary and secondary (sub-)research questions for the study. The primary question was stated as: How does a participatory project in which children, parents/primary-caregivers and the researcher participate, influence the various stakeholders' perceptions about the use of wordless picturebooks in the home?

The secondary or sub-questions were identified as follows:

1. What are the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards reading with wordless picturebooks (both parents/primary caregiver and child) – do they find value in doing this activity at home?

2. Are participants able to incorporate reading with wordless picturebooks as part of their daily routine and if they do, how do they go about doing it?

3. How do participants experience reading wordless picturebooks that are produced in and by their community, as opposed to books provided by schools and libraries?

4. What kinds of themes are introduced when parents and children are able to create their own stories for books, or to "produce" and create their own wordless picturebooks?

5. What kinds of multiple narratives emerged in visual texts produced by parents and children from different community groups during the reading sessions?

5.2   CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

This section serves to provide a broader context for the research and presents a discussion on the broader South African context. As a point of departure, the history of South Africa in terms of the policy of Apartheid is considered, with specific attention to two notable policies that are attributed to the current state of education and literacy in the country; namely, Black (or so-called Bantu) Education and the geographic separation of people in terms of the establishment of separate geographic territories (so-called Homelands) for the different black population groups. Here, the decolonisation of education is also briefly addressed. Thereafter, the current socio-economic context of South Africa is discussed, with specific attention to South African families, poverty, crime and violence. To conclude the section, a description of the three research sites, including the province in which they are located, is provided as a means to contextualise the research more specifically.

This study notes that South Africa faces a myriad of social and economic problems and that the introduction of wordless picturebooks into people's lives is by no means a single answer to address these. South Africa requires a multifaceted approach. Yet, much of the literature indicates that an increased focus on early childhood development and foundation phases is required to start addressing the broader issues that South African society faces.

South Africa presents a unique context for the study of wordless picturebooks. The country does not precisely correspond with the standard definitions of a developed or developing country; as a result, it has the benefit and disadvantage of being associated with both. High levels of poverty, social and material disparities and an array of social and health problems, including crime and violence, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, malnutrition and high rates of maternal depression (Cooper, Vally, Cooper, Radford, Sharples, Tomlinson & Murray, 2013, citing Cooper et al., 1999; Seedat et al., 2009; Hartley et al., 2011) all impact negatively on child development in the country. Additionally, there is compelling evidence that South African children have a distinct literacy disadvantage (Louw & Louw, 2014: 178). Cooper et al. (2013) write that most of the research regarding the value of shared or joint reading has been conducted in the developed world. Yet, the introduction of book sharing activities in the South African context could prove beneficial in terms of increasing the exposure to language opportunities in the home, which is currently very limited (Hart & Risely, in Cooper et al., 2013: 143).

Considering the previous discussion on the South African context, the struggle with literacy education and the importance of the parents as the child's first educator, this section looks at a number of factors that have been cited as contributing towards the current context of the research. An important consideration is South Africa's history, especially the legacy that Apartheid has left since its abolishment in 1991. Apartheid is the system of racial separation which was implemented by the

legislation in South Africa (Atmore, 2013: 153). Its laws had a profound effect on the country's Black, Coloured and Indian population and subsequently, many are still struggling to overcome a cycle of inequality that these laws established. Of particular interest to this study is the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which enforced racially separated educational facilities for whites and non-whites. Secondly, the geographic settlement patterns created by Apartheid's creation of Bantustan or homeland regions (Department of Social Development, 2013: 7) still have an effect on many South Africans' access to quality education and learning materials and should be considered with regards to the topic.

5.2.1   The legacy of Apartheid

South Africa's recognition of 11 official languages and its four major racial groups, each of which contains ethnic and linguistic sub-groups (Gibson, 2015: 41), serves as a testimony to the rich diversity of people to which the country is home and the different cultures that make up what Archbishop Desmond Tutu refers to as the "rainbow nation"; a term that celebrates the coming together of people of many different groups which were once divided by the Apartheid system.

Hendricks (2005: 5) writes that the transition from Apartheid to democracy in South Africa has been internationally recognised as a model of reconciliation. However, he warns that true reconciliation has not yet occurred. The legacy of Apartheid still affects the lives of many South Africans, as inequality is still a reality for many people (Hendricks, 2005: 8).

5.2.1.1 Bantu Education – implementation and consequence

Arguably, one of South Africa's most harmful Apartheid laws was that of Bantu Education; a law which brought African education under the control of the central government. Black people who were taught under the Bantu Education system were deprived of a quality education. Consequently, few had the necessary skills to do work beyond unskilled labour (Ramphele, 1993: 30, in Tshabalala, 2013). Language-wise, English and Afrikaans were compulsory subjects from the first year of schooling (Moloi, 2014: 266). Steve Biko (1978: 5), anti-Apartheid activist in South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, noted that the oppressor's most powerful weapon was the mind of the oppressed. Fanon (1967: 9) elaborated on the term 'colonised people' as "every people, in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality". Consequently, the colonised African is only raised above his "jungle status" through adopting the oppressors' culture. The inferiority complex that Biko and Fanon refer to risks being perpetuated, unless addressed by current social – especially education – systems.

The National Development Plan (NDP), 2030, released by the National Planning Commission in 2013, notes that at the time, eighteen years into democracy, the quality of school education for the majority of black learners has remained poor (NDP, 2013: 14). In an article entitled *South African Education is in Serious Trouble,* Pusch Commey (2014: 24) writes that inequalities in South African education have changed from being race-based to class-based, with schools in townships or rural areas having the least access to structural, financial and other educational resources. Heaton, Heaton and Dufur (2014: 107) reference Oosthuizen and Bhorat's (2006) study of the impact of infrastructure on educational outcomes in South Africa, which indicates that better facilities are correlated with superior school performance. McKay (2015: 98) refers to Maille (2004) in her statement that "rightly or wrongly, then, South Africans pin their hopes for a better life on education"; yet, the population living in under-resourced areas remain excluded from the many benefits of the advancements that South Africa has made since 1994.

Commey (2014: 25) writes that the value of *content* of education, and subsequently its psychological implications for success, remains surprisingly overlooked. "Notably absent", he writes, "is a crucial factor – African-centred education". Although flawed in that it was based on racial discrimination, Afrikaner-centred education enjoyed much success among Afrikaner children and despite the end of Apartheid, thrives in private institutions. Yet, "African-centred education is nowhere to be seen" Commey (2014: 25). Mother tongue education, discussed earlier in this study, is still seriously lacking in the South African context. Commey (2014: 25) refers to a body of research completed on African-centred education, which indicates that "without it, education in South Africa will perpetuate myths of white cultural superiority, co-opt Africans and disadvantage them in the long run".

Apart from books about Nelson Mandela, the school curriculum includes very little literature in which African schoolchildren can have their self-image represented as "winners" (Commey 2014: 25). The lack of provision of books in mother tongue language for school children (from Grade 4) further perpetuates this issue, as mother tongue no longer features as prominent in the educational space. In his forward to the 2008 edition of Franz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, Ziauddin Sardar (2008: xv) writes: "[t]he black man speaks with a European language. He becomes proportionately whiter in direct ratio to his mastery of … indeed, any western language, nowadays most particularly English". Sardar's writing asks how a black man is supposed to form an identity of the "black self" in the absence of blackness in language. Following this line of thought, we can then ask, within the education system: How does a black child, who is presented with an absence of blackness, not only in language of instruction, but in learning material, posit a "black self"? Commey (2014: 25) writes that prescribed reading books in South African schools include *Snow White* and *Little Red Riding Hood* which are

translated into Zulu and Xhosa as a prescribed text. The content here is also far removed from the African identity.

Apartheid, and the accompanying international isolation of South Africa, impacted on all aspects of life, including the field of children's literature. Removed from cultural exchanges due to sanctions enforced by many countries, South African children were exposed mostly to the mass market books from overseas, such as Enid Blyton. The picture books available at the time tended to be old-fashioned, "disneyfied" and cute. Jenkins (2012) writes that historically, writing for children was by whites, and largely for a white audience. "Up to the sixties, writing was complacently self-centred, reflecting the society it came from". South African authors and illustrators were, however, increasingly creating books that dealt with the country as it was – both good and bad. They captured the reality of urban squalor, frustration, the desire for education and made use of the beautiful scenery that the country had to offer. Children could look at books and identify with the place and communities being written about. Kimble and Lehman (2014: 38) write that including authentic voices of previously oppressed communities is vital for children's books in that they create a means for children to explore the history of their country through the unique characters in the books.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is a Kenyan novelist and post-colonial theorist, who – in his book, *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986) – writes about language and its role in national culture, history and identity. Central to his theories are the interconnectedness of language and culture, where "language as communication" and "language as culture" are both products of each other, in that communication creates culture and culture carries, specifically through orature and literature, "the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world (Ngũgĩ, 1986: 15–16). Colonisation involved the deliberate undervaluing of cultures, and Ngũgĩ (1986: 17) argues that children who were made to read literature in a language that they were forced to adopt (Afrikaans and/or English in the South African context), would only see the world in the literature or language of this adoption. Ngũgĩ (1986: 3) refers to English in Africa as a "cultural bomb", with effects that "annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environments, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves".

Fanon's work also addresses this issue. Fanon (1967: 114), in his book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, writes about a black school boy attending school in the Antilles. In the lessons, the black school boy identified with the heroes of a specifically "white" history and when he encounters his own culture in the lessons, he is taught that it is "savage". The black child growing up in Antilles then, as Fanon explains, "does not think of himself as a black man; he thinks of himself as an Antillean" (Fanon, 1967: 114).

In terms of language, wordless picturebooks, to a large extent, remove the need for a book or a story to be read in a prescribed language. The importance of this for the South African context is noteworthy

as part of an increased focus on decolonisation, rather than only from an educational or literacy acquirement perspective as discussed in the previous chapter. Professor Molefe Asante (in Commey, 2014: 25), a leading African-American expert on African-centred education, believes that as one of its principles, black education must aim to decolonise the African mind, with the primary aim of removing the power that foreign traditions may exercise. To this end, Eurocentric ideology needs to be detached from everyday African life, not with the aim of rejecting foreign tradition, but as a means of refusing adherence to its control.

The need to decolonise South African education has arguably been most prominently witnessed in the 2015 student protests that took place around the country. Although higher education is not the focus of this paper, the current debate about language and curriculum indicates a general unrest in the country about the ability of education to accommodate the many cultures that make up the country. Decolonisation of education and, by the same token, children's reading material, is an important factor in addressing the legacy of discrimination that so many South African's still experience in their daily lives.

5.2.1.2 Geographic separation: Homelands, Migrant Workers and Family Life

The Apartheid Bantustans, or homelands, were instituted as a means to separate the non-white population from the white. Black South Africans were allowed to become legal citizens of homelands designated for their ethnic group, which were run by their own, independent governments, but were denied South African citizenship or civil and political rights (South Africa History Online, 2011). Poverty in South Africa is still reflected by the Apartheid settlement patterns as, fundamentally, all poor households are located in the informal settlements and townships of former Bantustan regions (Department of Social Development, 2013:7).

Political-historical residues of the past still have an impact, especially on black and coloured families (Louw & Louw, 2014: 394). Housing policies, schooling, religion and other aspects of communal life of 'non-white' families were also severely affected by the Apartheid laws. Married couples, parents and children, family and kin were separated for long periods of time by, for example, enforced migration, influx control, poverty, poor educational provisions and housing constraints. For a long time, family life was circumscribed within the values of the white governing group, which promoted a western concept of the family. Consequently, certain long-standing traditions such as traditional marriages were no longer recognised and as a result many black families find themselves in a blend of two different cultural conventions (Louw & Louw, 2014: 394). It follows that storytelling traditions could also have been negatively impacted by these events, as families were separated for extended periods of times. Hall and Posel (2012: 44) note that there is little research that has sought to determine the

continued effect the spacial arrangements promoted by Apartheid continue to have on lives of children, who are growing up in post-Apartheid South Africa, and their families.

In concluding, the consequences of the Apartheid policies on the family should be taken into consideration in terms of their connection with the array of social ills that continue to challenge contemporary South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2013: 22-23). These challenges are discussed in the following section, starting with the family in South Africa, as the focus of this study is on a culture of reading within the home.

5.2.2   Current socio-economic conditions in South Africa

Within South Africa, urbanisation has taken, and is taking place at an unexpected rate. Despite the benefits thereof, mass urbanisation is also associated with increased pressure on employment, education, housing, health care and transport facilities. New migrants particularly risk inadequate housing, often living in overcrowded conditions with limited access to employment and health care (Louw & Louw, 2014: 392).

The following sections provide insight into the current conditions in South Africa that pertain to this research. Further, each research site and the community in which it is situated in will be discussed in order to create a picture of the socio-economic conditions in which the participants of this study reside. As the research deals with reading in the home, a discussion on the family will form the point of departure.

5.2.2.1 The South African family

Susan Zhiel (2003: 195) writes that "The family is generally regarded as a major social institution. Along with the economy, polity, education and (sometimes) religion, it has been viewed as one of those essential ingredients, without which no society can function". Socialisation, or in other words, ensuring that each generation is familiar with and abides by the cultural norms and values of a specific society, is the primary role of the family.

Zhiel (2003: 217) however, notes that within the South African context – and politically speaking – the family has not benefitted from much prominence. Many families find it difficult to realise cherished beliefs about "what families are and what they should be", as the socio-economic conditions in which they live make it impossible for them (Louw & Louw, 2014: 394). Notwithstanding the numerous positive changes for black people since the end of Apartheid, many black children, especially, live in unfavourable conditions.

Socio-economic factors have a profound impact on the family as the "most important source of education" (Hardon, 1998:1, in Department of Social Development, 2013: 6). The family influences

school performance and retention, a child's levels of confidence and self-esteem and capacity to deal with challenges and adversities. Members of a family serve as a child's first teachers, and they have the ability to model types of behaviour that exert a considerable influence on children. In essence, the family has the potential to improve socio-economic wellbeing of not only individuals, but society at large.

Single-parent household are common in South Africa, with the Department of Social Development (2013: 19) reporting that more that 40% of South African households are headed by single parents. Holborn and Eddy (2011, in Department of Social Development, 2013: 19) noted that South African single parents were "overwhelmingly African, female and between the ages of 25 and 34". They were also often unemployed. The dependents in FHH are often children and additional monetary and emotional support needed by them can place increased strain on the FHH (Department of Social Development, 2013: 19-20). It can be assumed that the increased responsibility of the single parents to provide for, care for and support their children and other family members has a negative impact on activities for enjoyment, such as storytelling or joint reading practices.

Skip-generation households are households in which the grandparents are responsible for caring for their grandchildren. Statistics South Africa (2011a, in Department of Social Development 2013: 20) estimated that 7.6% of all South African children live in these types of households. The pervasiveness of HIV and AIDS is often referred to as a reason for the high prevalence of skip-generation households among Africans (Mturi et al., 2005, in Department of Social Development, 2013: 20), but the fragmentation that migrant labour causes in families should also be considered (Department of Social Development, 2013: 20). Skip-generation households are regularly described as "fragile", due to the fact that the grandparents are often struggling with their own health and financial issues, and the additional financial obligations that providing care for their grandchildren places on them is often linked to the psychological and psychosocial behaviour issues of the children (Toremann, 2009, in Department of Social Development, 2013: 20). In many grandparent-headed households, the only income is the grandparents' monthly pension, which is used to care for themselves and their grandchildren; this leads to these households living on, or below, the poverty line (Gasa & Plaaitjies, 2013: 431). In terms of the impact on a child's education, grandparents may not always be in a position to assist their grandchildren; sometimes due to illiteracy or limited schooling, or a lack of awareness of the developments that have been made in education (Gasa & Plaaitjies, 2013: 430).

In concluding the discussion of family structure in South Africa and the impact it has on the family – the child's first educator – a number of socio-economic factors repeatedly surface, including poverty, education and an unstable environment. These will be elaborated on further below, before discussing the research sites of the study.

5.2.2.2 Poverty and the wealth gap

Van der Berg (2010: 3) argues that South African social indicators[53] resemble those of lower-middle income or even low income countries[54], reflecting the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities in the country[55]. The inequality in income distribution is sizable (Van der Berg, 2010), with the Department of Social Development (2013: 22) attributing this to the reproduction of "disparities in ownership, income, resources, skills and other determinants of people's capacity to take advantage of opportunities". Benefits of growth are consequently biased in favour of those who are "already better off" (Department of Social Development, 2013: 22). Gavin Keeton (2014: 29) notes that inequality remains high, largely due to unemployment, which he estimates to be between 25% and 35%[56]. South African's social transfers system provides only for the disabled, elderly and children from poor households, but Keeton writes that no provision is made for the unemployed.

Poverty is, however, not simply a symptom of insufficient income or a lack of material goods. Rather, it impacts on both the physical and psychological development of an individual. Poverty impacts people's "health, nutrition, education, employment, access to various services and facilities, as well as the person's psychological wellbeing" (Louw & Louw, 2014: 413). It proves to be a difficult cycle to break, as it has often been a way of life for several generations; "impoverished children are more likely to become impoverished parents" (Louw & Louw, 2014: 412). The poverty statistics were analysed in the previous chapter, but it is important to note Louw and Louw's (2014: 413) statement that poverty denies children the competencies and opportunities that they need, not only to survive, but to develop and thrive.

5.2.2.3 Crime and Violence

The release of the 2016 crime statistics for South Africa were cause for concern with regard the increase in violent crimes in the past year[57] (Etheridge, Herman & Evans, 2016). Crime in South Africa features prominently in both local and international news media, and the "country's reputation as a crime capital stretches far and wide" (Kearney & Erasmus, 2013). Chandre Gould (2014), a researcher at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), notes that increased crime has several consequences:

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[53] These include life expectancy, infant mortality or quality of education.

[54] The World Bank Group (2016) classify low-income economies for the 2017 fiscal year as being as those with a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of $1,025 or less in 2015, while lower middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between $1,026 and $4,035; upper middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between $4,036 and $12,475; high-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of $12,476 or more.

[55] South Africa has a small group of high-income earners which sharply increases average incomes, but Van der Berg (2010: 3) notes that this "has little impact on average social indicators, which are low because of this very same inequality".

[56] Keeton includes in these statistics, people who have given up looking for employment.

[57] The murder rate for the country increased by 4,9%, translating to around 51 murders in the country every day. Other contact crimes, such as car hijackings, increased by over 14% from the previous year, and house robberies increased by 2,7% (Etheridge, Herman & Evans, 2016).

> With each year that violence remains so prevalent, the number of South Africans who have experienced and witnessed violence increases, and so does the extent of national trauma. This has serious consequences to the health system, our ability to work as a nation, and our ability to raise a new generation of safe and healthy children.

Louw and Louw (2014: 420) argue that the term "community violence[58]" is virtually a household term in South Africa. Community violence involves exposure to "acts of violence in the neighbourhood where a person and his or her family live" (Louw & Louw, 2014: 420). The witness does not need to be a victim of the violence; just observing or hearing about it qualifies. Research by Shields et al. (2008, in Louw & Louw, 2014: 420) indicated that among a group of 8 to 13 year-olds in township schools in Cape Town, hearing about violence had almost the same negative impact that witnessing violence.

Children who are exposed to community violence are often exposed to other negative life experiences, such as poverty, neglect, poor nutrition, overcrowding, lack of medical care, substance abuse, unemployed parents and psychopathy. The effects of exposure to violence consequently need to be viewed in the broader context in which an individual, child or adult, is embedded (Louw & Louw, 2014: 421). Children exposed to violence are at an increased risk of developing mental disorders, especially depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Louw & Louw, 2014: 420). Poor families may lack the resources to seek help for adults and children who have been negatively affected by violence.

Community violence has most recently been seen in the service delivery protests which escalated in the run-up to the 2016 regional elections. Municipal IQ, a group that monitors and assesses the performance of municipalities, reported at least 70 service-delivery protests from January to April 2016 (Mapumulo, 2016). Many of these were violent and included the destruction of both public and private property. Additionally, the majority of the protests took place in areas where service delivery remains a major challenge, such as underdeveloped informal settlements (Mapumulo, 2016).

Violent protests often adversely affect the very institutions that are most important in uplifting communities, with many schools being burnt down in resident protests. The City Press newspaper reported that almost 60 000 pupils were affected and 50 schools burnt down in the Vuwani area of Limpopo due to protests and wider shutdowns (Tau, 2016).

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[58] A narrow definition of community violence includes violent protests, the use of weapons, muggings, gang wars, substance abuse, racial clashes and violent crimes in public places, committed by individuals who are not generally related to the victim. The duration of this violence is long-lasting (chronic). A broader definition includes violence committed in an individual's school, home, community or in the media, and violence such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse committed by an acquaintance at home or school also fits the criteria. The exposure to violence, in the broader definition, includes short-term exposure (Louw & Louw 2014: 421).

Crime statistics are often a topic of conversation in South Africa, yet the reasons for the high rate of violent crime in the country is seldom referenced. Rebecca Davis (2015), reporting in the Daily Maverick on violent crime in South Africa, refers to Gould's reports on violent crime in South Africa and to Gould's investigation into the causes of violent crime in South Africa. She writes that factors that contribute to a person participating in acts of violence start early in childhood. Children need "stable and engaging environments", a fact that Malek (in Davis, 2015) says cannot be overstated. Gould (2016) states that "Our best chance of preventing violent crime is to ensure that children are warmly cared for".

The South African context presents a challenge for literacy development and the creation of a reading culture. The answers to challenges such as these need to be approached from a holistic standpoint and, whereas this research by no means argues that wordless picturebooks are a means of solving the reading crisis, it could be a small step in the right direction of developing an early love for reading.

5.2.3   Context of the primary research: Gauteng and research sites

Gauteng, Sesotho for "place of gold", was founded on the wealth of gold found in the many mines in the area, which at its high point contributed 40% of the world's gold production. The economy has since diversified, with sectors such as finance and manufacturing replacing the mining industry as an economic pillar. Of Gauteng's population, 97% live in urban centres, essentially forming "one big city" (SouthAfrica.info, 2016). Tshwane, based in the northern part of Gauteng, is the capital of South Africa, while Johannesburg is the capital of Gauteng, and is home to 23.7% of South Africa's population. The people of Gauteng have the highest per capita income level in the country, but it should be noted that it is also the financial hub of South Africa, and there exists a vast difference in salaries between the educated, employed minority and the poor majority.

Gauteng has the second highest incidence of people living in informal dwellings (19.8%), with 29.6% of households benefitting from at least one social grant in 2014 (Stats SA, 2014: 12). In terms of education, 47.4% of children are enrolled in ECD centres in Gauteng (Stats SA, 2014: 10), yet, as seen in Chapter 4, evaluating the quality of education that they receive at these centres is a difficult task.

The research was conducted in Tshwane, a metropolitan area incorporating Pretoria and surrounding towns and townships. Tshwane is amongst the six largest metropolitan municipalities in South Africa and has approximately 2.9 million residents (Stats SA, 2011). According to Stats SA, as per findings from the 2011 Census Survey which was released in 2012,[59] 24.3% of Tshwane's population is classified

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[59]This study makes use of the General Household Census document that was released by Stats SA in 2016, but, due to the fact that detailed information in respect of especially smaller municipalities and metropolitan areas are not published regularly, the results from the Census 2011 survey are used.

as living in poverty. Census 2011 data (Stats SA, 2011) indicates that 15% of households and 44% of individuals do not have any form of income and 21% of the population have income varying from R401 to R1 600 per month (Stats SA, n.d.).

5.2.3.1 Research Sites:

Research was conducted at three crèches in Tshwane. This section will discuss each site separately in order to provide the context for the research. Information on the specific crèche will be given, as well as a demographic profile of the larger community in which it is based.

5.2.3.1.1 The Funanani Trust

Participants for the first two reading programmes were sourced from Funanani, a charitable trust based in Pretoria, Gauteng. The trust has three centres in the Gauteng area and authorisation was granted by the Funanani management to accommodate the research at two of these sites; namely, Shoshanguve and Mamelodi (See Appendix B).

Funanani's mission is mobilise volunteers to become involved at grassroots level with children, families and communities in need, to source and co-ordinate the distribution of resources and to facilitate reconciliation across racial boundaries through the operation of centres in the greater Tshwane community from which programmes can be run. These programmes are focused on young children, the youth, their families and the surrounding community. Their belief is that by focusing on the child and the family, the community will benefit from these programmes. Both the Shoshanguve and Mamelodi centres are located in impoverished communities and focus on orphaned and vulnerable children and their families. Both these locations have an Early Childhood Development centre, which provides pre-school education to these children. Children are also provided with a healthy breakfast and lunch each day, as well as a morning and afternoon snack. The centre is committed to providing a physically and emotionally safe environment where learners can develop, grow and learn while having fun, to prepare them to successfully navigate through their primary school years. Further, the trust provides Family Support Services and a Temporary Safe Care Home for those in need of these services (Funanani, 2016).

All the children enrolled at the centres are from homes where one, or sometimes both biological parents are either absent, deceased or unemployed. A condition of enrolment is that the child is from a 'vulnerable' family that does not have the means to provide pre-school education that is available in the community (King, 2016). The families' vulnerability also extends to their financial situation. Their income is generally in the form of grants received from the government (Holtzhausen, 2016).

The two sites will be discussed individually:

5.2.3.1.1.1   The Funanani Trust's Shoshanguve centre

Shoshanguve is a township located about 25 km north of Pretoria. The majority of the population is African (99.2%), with the highest age distribution being between 20 and 29 years old. Of the population, 27.5% falls under the youth (0-14) category; 35.5% of the population (aged 20+) has completed some secondary schooling, with another 35% having matriculated. Also, 10.4% of the population aged 20 and over have had some higher education, 3.9% completed only their primary school education and a further 9.6% completed only some primary education. With regard to adults, 5.6% of the adult population have no education whatsoever. The dependency ratio in the community is 44.2%. Households headed by females make up 37.5% of the population, with 73.8% of the population having access to formal dwellings (Stats SA, 2011.).

The township has been the scene of numerous protests over the last two years (2015 and 2016), varying from service delivery and wage dispute protests, protests at the Shoshanguve campus of the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) during the 205 #FeesMustFall[60] movement, and in 2016 protests over the election of the ANC's 2016 mayoral candidate for the area. The unrest has escalated to violence, which has included the burning of municipal vehicles and shop looting – with foreign nationals falling victim to serious losses (Tau, 2016b).

Research was conducted at The Funanani Trust's Shoshanguve centre from 21 September to 12 November 2015, with the assistance of the centre manager, Marie Holtzhausen, who provided information about the study to families, whereafter they were invited to volunteer as participants. The families whose children are enrolled at the ECD at this site or who were part of the Family Support Programme consist mostly of single mothers. A very small percentage of the children had fathers (around 12%). The majority of the families had additional vulnerabilities, such as single parenting, illness, care dependent adults, emotional problems, unstable family structures and destructive family dynamics, such as neglect and violence (Holtzhausen, 2016). Single mothers made up 57% of all families that were involved in the centre's programmes, with a further 24% consisting of grandmother-headed households. Of the 249 children who were involved in the centre's programmes, 28 were orphans, and there was one child-headed house. There is an almost equal distribution of boys and girls enrolled at the centre. The Shoshanguve Centre encourages parents to participate in activities hosted at the crèche, but has had varying levels of success over the years.

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[60]#FeesMustFall is a student led protest movement that began in mid-October 2015 in response to an increase in fees at South African universities

5.2.3.1.1.2   The Funanani Trust's Mamelodi centre

Mamelodi is situated to the North East of Pretoria. The 2011 Census indicates that Mamelodi has a population of 33 4557 people with 110 703 households. 23.3% of the population are classified as youths. Some 61% of the population live in formal housing, with an average household consisting of 2.9 people. The dependency ratio here is 35.7%, with a report from the University of Pretoria recording the unemployment rate at 63.6% (Antonites & Ngwatle, 2015: i). Also, 33% of the households are female headed. Of the population, 38.4% aged 20 and over have matriculated, with only 9.5% having had some higher education and 4.3% of the adult population have had no schooling at all (Stats SA, 2011).

Funanani's Mamelodi Centre has a similar demographic as the Shoshanguve Centre, with the majority of families comprising single mothers or grandmother-headed households. Similar vulnerabilities described at the Shoshanguve Centre exist in Mamelodi. The centre has tried to involve the parents in a volunteer programme where they assist in the preparation of food for the ECD centre children, as well as with the general cleaning functions that go along with food preparation. They have had varying measures of success over the years, with a handful of parents who have become the 'regular' helpers. The principal reports that in terms of involvement in the school programme, parents show great interest and excellent attendance at all school events; for example, Sports Fun Day, Concerts and Graduation events (King, 2016). Research was conducted at the centre from the 22 September 2015 until 13 November 2015. Mrs. Marueen King, the principal of the centre at the time, assisted in contacting participants at this site.

5.2.3.1.2   The NEA Foundation

NEA is a Swahili word for "purpose, to prepare the way, to set in motion, to be a starting block" (NEA Foundation, 2016). The NEA Foundation was established in 2011, with the vision of purposefully creating environments where change is possible, by focusing on the strengths and potential of communities, effective service delivery in early childhood and family intervention. This is done through cultivating a sense of responsibility in communities for their own well-being and future, breaking the cycle of helplessness and the mind-set of dependency and creating awareness and opportunities for the involvement and empowerment of the public (NEA Foundation, 2016). In order to do this, the foundation acknowledges the need to familiarise themselves with the "dynamics, cultures, values, roles and perceptions in the communities. Identifying potential leaders and change makers is fundamental to form power partnerships within the communities and to encourage ownership for accepting the challenges and the impact of the projects" (Steyn & van Vuuren, 2015: 4).

5.2.3.1.2.1   Happy Sabby Day Care

Permission was granted by the Foundation to conduct research at one of their beneficiary sites – namely, the Happy Sabby Crèche – which is located in Danville, Pretoria West at the entrance of the Melutsi Township (See Appendix C). The day care centre is run by a principal, Sabrina [surname unknown], who started the day care centre from a shack which was managed by the community members. NEA is supporting the school and the community in pursuing its goal of quality preschool education for the children who reside there. The crèche provides day care for around 40 children.

Happy Sabby is a small day care centre, which currently consists of a container-like building with two classrooms, a reception area, a small office and a kitchen. There is also a fenced off, outside play area which the children can use. The reading programme was run from 3 March 2016 to 5 May 2016 with the aim of pilot testing the books created at the Funanani centres in 2015. During this time, the centre did not have access to basic facilities, such as running water, electricity or ablution facilities for the children or teachers. The principal provided the parents with information on the study, and they were then asked to volunteer.

The Melutsi township was established on the outskirts of Danville in Pretoria West. Statistics on the population who live in the camp are not readily available[61]. The area changes quite often due to the fact that it is used as a relocation site for people who need to be removed from other settlements in the surrounding areas (Van Vuuren, 2016).

5.3   DESIGN OF THE STUDY

5.3.1   Research approach and paradigm

The research followed a qualitative approach within a constructionist paradigm. A constructionist approach believes that reality can only be socially and personally constructed, rather than objectively existing "out there". Subsequently, the subject under investigation should be actively involved, as reality can only be known by those who experience is personally (Fouché & Schurink, 2011: 310). Paradigms associated with constructionism include participate action research (PAR) which was consequently used as the research design for the study.

Qualitative research allows for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, in Fouché & Schurink, 2011: 310) , which made it an ideal approach to use in this study. First, an in-depth literature review was conducted on wordless picturebooks and the aforementioned theoretical

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[61] The area is not found on any internet search. The name was communicated to me by the principal of Happy Sabby.

frameworks. Desktop research was conducted to establish the history and development of wordless picturebooks and their current use in educational environments, in addition to their use and production within the South Africa context.

As a means to further investigate the use of these books in the household, a reading project was hosted at three sites in literate-poor areas of Gauteng, which will be discussed in detail in this chapter. However, to provide some context for the sections immediately following, it is useful to give a brief overview of the project. The aim of the reading project was to conduct an empirical investigation into the use of these books in practice, and to establish the feasibility of the proposed theory in practice; namely, that wordless picturebooks could serve as a tool to create a culture of reading in the home. Furthermore, the programme hosted a story collection workshop, which resulted in the participants producing their own wordless picturebooks with the aim of creating content relevant wordless picturebooks for the community to keep after the completion of the project. The aim of these books was to create content that the participants could relate to, and to investigate themes that emerged from the stories. The workshops were held at two of the three research sites. Research at the third site was conducted on completion of the project at the first sites; it served as a means to pilot tests the books developed in the initial project.

5.3.2 Research design

Participatory Action Research (PAR) was used as the research design for this study. PAR places emphasis on the involvement of all the role players in the research project (Strydom, 2011: 491). The researcher's role in PAR is to serve as a resource for those being studied; and research participants are typically disadvantaged groups (Babbie, 2013: 341). According to McIntyre (2000, in Morrell, 2006: 6), there are three principles that guide most PAR projects. First, the collective investigation of a problem; second, the reliance on indigenous knowledge to better understand that problem; and third, the desire to take individual and/or collective action to deal with the stated problem. The process of PAR should be empowering for the community.

PAR was chosen for this research, as the problem required that the academic interest in wordless books be evaluated in the communities where such problems are located. The study also wanted to empower parents in their own reading practices at home, without the researcher dictating how participants need to use the books at home. Further, it was hoped that participants' involvement in decisions made during the research would serve an empowering function, whereby the overall goal was to use the findings to influence social change, without assuming that the researcher is able to determine participant needs.

5.3.3   Sample selection

The population for the study were parents or primary caregivers that resided in low socio-economic areas. The research sites for the study comprised three ECD (Early Childhood Development) or day care centres in literacy-poor areas in Tshwane; namely, Shoshanguve, Mamelodi and the Melutsi Townships. The ECD/day care centres were selected using purposive sampling and were identified as existing within low-literacy areas and in low SES areas. The rationale for this was that low literacy levels are often linked to lack of exposure to books, which in turn is linked with low SES families.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants at the three research sites, with the initial aim being to involve 12 children from each crèche and their parent/caregiver (hereafter referred to as participant pairs)[62]. Children were identified as potential participants based on their ages.

The sampling frame specified that children needed to be between the ages of three and six to partake in the study, as they had not been exposed to a primary (Grade 1 and upward) school environment. The selected children were, however, enrolled at an ECD/day care centre and would probably have been exposed to some form of reading before the intervention. Parents who perceive themselves as struggling with reading were encouraged to participate in the study with their children. These parents were purposively sampled with the help of the centre manager or principal at the respective sites. They were asked by the school to volunteer for the study. They were invited to an introductory session, in which the purpose of the research was explained and, after an informed consent form was signed, they were invited to take part in an initial focus group.

5.4   DATA COLLECTION

Data collection took place at the three sites between September 2015 and May 2016. Research at the first two research sites –namely, Shoshanguve and Mamelodi – took place in 2015 and both programmes were run concurrently. Research at Happy Sabby in the Melutsi Township was conducted in 2016 and served as a means to pilot test the books created at the first two sites. Data collection at this site was conducted slightly differently and will be discussed separately. Figure 5.1 provides a visual timeline of the data collection for September 2015 to May 2016.

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[62] It was decided that instead of capping the number of participants at 12 participant pairs, arrangements would be made for *all* parents who wished to take part in the reading programme to do so. Consequently, participant numbers at the three sites varied.

Figure 5.1: Research Timeline
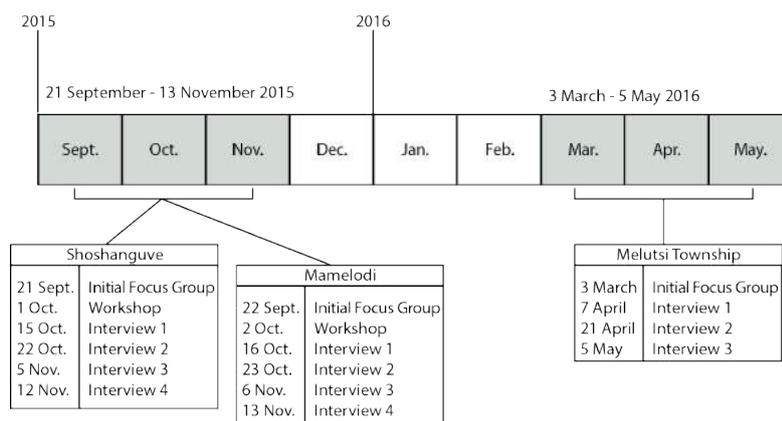
5.4.1   The Funanani Trust: Shoshanguve and Mamelodi sites

Data collection at the Shoshanguve and Mamelodi sites was divided into four sections. The data collection as a whole was viewed as a reading programme, which involved participants being given books to take home with them and meeting every second week for an interview and to collect further books for reading. Data collection was done in the form of one focus group, a story collection workshop and individual and group semi-structured interviews. The methods used were largely dependent on participant preference, as they were involved in decision making during the programme. Data collection methods that worked best for the participants were prioritised throughout the programme, Consequently, participants who preferred to travel together opted to have group interviews, whereas participants who lived close to the centre sometimes participated in individual interviews. The different phases of the data collection will be discussed below. All focus groups and interviews took place in the centre in a private space made available at both sites. At Shoshanguve, an upstairs communal area was made available for interviews and the researcher, translator and participants were the only ones who had access to this space during the scheduled times. A classroom was made available at the Mamelodi site, where all interviews and focus groups took place privately.

The programme allowed for six contact sessions with the researcher, including the initial introduction and focus group. These sessions were held every two weeks, working around public and school holidays. The programme was kept to the school term, as it allowed for a convenient, safe meeting place for all participants; the children were already on site and this minimised the transport requirements for participants. Transport was arranged for parents who did not live within walking distance of the centre and for those who were physically unable to get to the centre due to illness or

disability. A translator was available at all data collection sessions to allow participants to speak in their home language if they were not comfortable speaking English.

5.4.1.1 Phase 1: Introduction and initial focus groups

The introduction phase served as a means to introduce the researcher to the parents and primary caregivers, to introduce the reading programme and also to gain informed consent (refer appendix D) and assent (refer appendix E) from all participants. Research commenced in Shoshanguve on 21 September 2015 and Mamelodi on 22 September 2015.

This session also allowed for data to be collected via a focus group, the aim of which was to gather details on what the participants' current reading practices in the home were, if they had access to books or other reading materials and what they considered to be the main challenges to reading in the home. The focus group additionally sought to establish the parent/primary caregiver's reading history. A translator was available for participants who were not proficient in English and the focus group interview allowed for some debate on the topic. The focus group was recorded with permission from participants and later transcribed.

Focus groups are concerned with studying how "participants express their views and perspectives and a particular issue as members of a group" (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 232). The approach was not overly structured or intrusive and a few very general questions were used as a guideline (Appendix G). The focus group allowed for participants to share their experiences of reading at home and to identify similarities in the problems they experienced. These problems were then revisited in interviews that followed during and after the implementation of the reading programme. The supportive presence of other participants with similar interests or concerns facilitates an environment in which group participants may be more willing to share information that they would be comfortable discussing in an individual interview (Robinson 1993), particularly with an interviewer who is not well known to them. Bryman & Bell (2011: 237) write that a focus group reduces the risk of creating a power relationship between the researcher and participants, as much of the direction of the interview is guided by the group, with the researcher (or moderator) having less input than in a traditional interview. This is an important consideration for a focus group whose members are from a low socio-economic community, as was the case with this study.

Upon concluding the focus groups, parents were informed of the programme's schedule over the next few weeks and invited to attend a story collection workshop the following week (1 and 2 October, in Shoshanguve and Mamelodi, respectively). The aim of the workshop was explained to them and they were encouraged to ask any questions.

5.4.1.2 Phase 2: Story collection workshop and the creation of participant authored wordless picturebooks

At this stage of the research, parents/primary caregivers and their children were invited to attend a story collection workshop, facilitated by Nal'iBali[63]. The two Nal'iBali facilitators started the workshop with a song about reading, which generated an interest in the activity by parents and children. They then continued with a read-aloud of a picturebook (with text) to the participants. They demonstrated how to spark interest in the books by asking questions about the pictures. After the reading session, individual participant pairs were asked to create a story together. It was explained to them that their story would be documented and turned into a wordless picturebook that would later be circulated as part of the reading programme.

Katherine J. Goodnow and Yngvar Natland (2002) assert that African storytelling traditions support communal ownership of stories and involve multiple forms of expression, such as mime, dance, music and verbal narrative. The collection of stories could comprise multiple forms. Data collection at this stage was be done in a format that best suited the participants and they were provided with support in documenting stories in the following ways:

Verbal narrative: participants can "tell" a story, which will be documented by the researcher:

- Song

- Dance

- Drawing/doodling/mark making: Participants were invited to create their story visually in a medium that is (a) available and easy to provide by the researcher (for example, paints, crayons, pencils, collage and clay), and (b) a medium in which they feel they can best express themselves.

The majority of participants chose to use a combination of verbal narrative and visual mark-making methods as a means of documenting their stories. These documented stories were later used as source material to create a wordless picturebook that was compiled, printed and bound by the researcher.

Story collection forms an integral part of the research; as participative action research (PAR) requires that the research participants become active partners in the entire research process (Baum, MacDougall & Smith, 2006). In this case, participants were invited to create local content that they would like to see circulated in their community. Furthermore, the goal here was to get the community

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[63] Nal'iBali is a "national reading-for-enjoyment campaign to spark children's potential through storytelling and reading" (Nal'iBali, 2016).

to participate in a project associated with pre-literacy events and to document the process. This documentation also served as a means to identify culturally relevant themes for specified cultures and communities.

This research acknowledges the researcher's position as a white female and the fact that she will, in the majority of the participants' cases, have a different cultural and historical background to that of research participants; this needs to be taken into consideration. Jonathan Harvey (2013: 86) encourages researchers to reflect on their own identities as being of particular importance within any research project. The researcher could not assume that she would be able to suggest, or simply create, relevant local content for wordless picturebooks for certain communities or cultures. The reliance on research participants to be actively involved in the creation of stories and relevant content is one of the aspects of this study that seeks to empower communities through their participation in this project. This aspect of the research is discussed in depth in the following section (refer to Trustworthiness).

The documentation of these stories – and consequently the creation of wordless picturebooks from them – were dependent on participant preference. Participants were provided with the choice of creating the illustrations for the book themselves using available materials (these illustrations would then be collected by the researcher and compiled in a book in a way that is true and respectful of the participants' wishes) or allowing the researcher or another illustrator to create illustrations for their story, which would be interpreted in a respectful manner.

Data collected in this phase consisted of the children's drawings and the parents' written interpretations of the these stories, along with the dialogue that the pictures sparked. Some of the parents also participated in drawing, but most allowed their children to explore the art media. These drawings and stories were then used as the foundation in creating wordless picturebooks.

All participants chose to allow their books to be illustrated by external illustrators or by the researcher. Books were illustrated by the researcher – who is herself an illustrator – and four other art practitioners who volunteered their services[64]. It should be noted here that due to the short time of the reading programme, illustration and production of the books needed to be completed within a two-week time period. This period included documenting the stories, scanning all images and writing produced by participants, mock-ups of books, illustration work, preparation of the layout of the books and all paratextual elements, and finally, printing and binding 18 individual story books. Consequently, these books should be viewed as prototype products, rather than high quality, finished wordless picturebooks. It is acknowledged that the future creation of these books will require more than the

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[64] Namely, Maaike Bakker, Stephen Wallace, Anike van den Berg and Karma Bosman (an illustration student).

time allocated during this programme. The length of books produced in this study varied between 8 and 12 pages and were mostly very simple narratives, using stylised illustrations.

Prototyping provides many benefits and is core to how designers (and illustrators) do their work. Coughlan, Suri and Canales (2007: 3) write that prototyping involves "moving from the world of abstract ideas, analysis, theories, plans and specifications to the world of concrete, tangible and experiential things" and that prototypes should be viewed as "representations of design ideas created before final artefacts". Prototyping these books allowed for feedback on a number of aspects, ranging from the enjoyment of participant-created narratives, to the enjoyment of illustration style and book format and the difficulty of the narrative. As discussed below, the participant feedback on their prototype books indicate a number of ways forward for future programmes that incorporate community-authored books.

Full acknowledgement was given to participant pairs as the authors of the stories, and their names (with permission from participants) were included on the title pages of the end products (the printed and bound wordless picturebooks). They were also given the option to remain anonymous authors, in which case, the crèche where the story was collected would be acknowledged as central to the production of the story. All participants chose to have their names on the book, and also singed a permission form (Appendix F) for the book to be used by the researcher in further pilot studies and for a copy to be kept in Funanani's library[65].

5.4.1.3 Phase 3: Circulation of existing wordless picturebooks

Upon completing the story collection workshop, participants were each given two wordless picturebooks to take home with them and invited to spend time reading these at home. Participants were given a demonstration on how the books work. It was explained that although the books did not contain text, they could "read" the book by creating stories from the pictures. The books selected for this phase of the research were all South African wordless picturebooks. It was decided not to include international books in the study at first, because of the expense[66].

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[65] The books created in this programme were sponsored by Brightrock, a life insurance company for the funds were made to the company via email, and the readiness for them to participate in a programme such as this is a positive result for the consideration of corporate social funding for the production of wordless picture books. Their logo, as well those of Funanani and Nal'iBali's, appeared in the inside back cover of every book as a means to acknowledge all stakeholders in the programme. Printing four copies of each book (72 books in total) cost around ZAR8 000.00, as cost-effective paper and staple binding was used. However, it still gives insight into the high cost of printing, as each book cost over R100 to produce.

[66] These books average at around R130.00 each, and consequently would clearly not be a realistic option for parents, caregivers or the crèche in a low SES area with limited funding, to invest in. As the focus of the study is on economically viable books, only books that cost less than R40.00, and which were readily available via Biblionef, were used.

The books used were:

- *Abongi's journey* (2004) by Kerry Saadien-Raad and Tania Rosser;

- *A very nice day* (2006), illustrated by Natalie Hinrichsen with concept by Anne Walton;

- *Max* (2010) by Warwick Goldswain;

- *One starry night* (2011) by Geoff Walton;

- *The rainbow birds* (2001) by Piet Grobler;

- *The Swimming Pool* (2002) by Fiona Beal (Author), Karen Engeldow (Illustrator) (only one participant pair read this due to limited availability of other books).

Participants were given two of the above books to take home for a two-week period. It should be noted that although participants were given a demonstration on how wordless books could be used, no formal process for *how* to use them was prescribed for the study. For example, parents were not instructed that they had to read the book to their child first; they were not told where in the home the reading should take place; and were not given any instruction as to how, physically, the reading should happen (for example, the child sitting in the parent's lap, or the parent sitting on the floor with the child). It is acknowledged that different cultures have different manners of interacting in the home, and it cannot be assumed that the predominantly Western notion of joint reading as an intimate activity is always translated in the same manner. In a conference paper delivered by Thandeka Cochrane (2016), entitled *Literacy and Intimacy: Embodied Practices of Paired Reading and Respect in Rural Malawi*, she emphasises the role that respect plays as a key factor of the "social contract" and of children's expressions of love to the parent. She further explores how the physical intimacy of literacy practices, often encouraged in literacy development projects, can jeopardise this important cultural structure. Activities taken for granted as "normal" within in the Western notion of joint reading, such as sitting with the child, can become a threat to the "moral boundaries encoded in embodied practices of respect, such as kneeling, curtseying and sitting on the floor" and consequently challenges the way in which these adults and parents expect to relate to the child. This study allowed participants to read in their home in a manner that was comfortable for them, without prescribing any specific ritual. Participants explained that sometimes they would sit with their children and read; at other times their children would read the book while the parent/primary caregiver was continuing with house work. The method of reading then varied between participants. After spending two weeks with their books, participant pairs were invited to the centre for an interview.

Data collection for this phase was done in the form of two semi-structured individual or group interviews over a four-week period (two contact sessions). The goal of this study was to extract rich

material that could be used in the data analysis (Greef, 2011: 342) and consequently, a semi-structured interview, in which an interview schedule (refer Appendix H) was developed - this included a list of questions with specific topics to be covered. These interviews were audio recorded – with permission from participants – and later transcribed (Creswell, 2014). The aim of this interview was to establish how participants had experienced reading the wordless picturebooks in their homes, and also to revisit problems that they had identified which made reading difficult for them in the initial focus group interview. Both parent/primary caregiver and the child were invited to participate in this interview, although the majority of the data was collected from the adult participant.

Interviews varied between individual interviews; some were small group interviews of two or three participants, depending on participant preference. Often, participants chose to conduct interviews as a group because of transport arrangements. At all stages, participants were given the option of which data collection method they preferred and felt most comfortable with, because part of PAR is that participants should also be included in decisions pertaining to data collection and analysis and deciding what action should happen as a result of the research findings (Baum, MacDougall & Smith, 2006).

5.4.1.4 Phase 4: Circulation of participant-authored wordless picturebooks

Once the wordless picturebooks had been printed, they were circulated among research participants. The study produced 13 books from the Shoshanguve site and 5 books from the Mamelodi site. During the third stage of the research, participants were invited to take a selection of these books home with them, after which they were asked again participate in semi-structured interviews (again in individual participant pairs or in participant groups). The final interviews also served as debriefing tools for participants. This discussion served as an idea sharing platform for the creation of a storytelling and book creation project at the crèche, which could continue after the research had concluded. Participants were invited to give their input and given suggestions on how best to continue with this process.

In concluding the discussion of the data collection, the aim of this data collection was to establish how, and whether, participants were able to incorporate reading as part of their routine, what their perceptions and attitude towards reading wordless picturebooks were (both parent/primary caregiver and child), whether they found value in doing this activity at home and how they experienced reading wordless picturebooks that were produced in and by their community, as opposed to wordless picturebooks provided in the previous reading sessions. There was also a strong focus on how participant agency has been affected by the process.

5.4.2   Melutsi Township: Happy Sabby Day Care

Happy Sabby Day Care provided a site where the prototype books authored by participants at the Shoshanguve and Mamelodi sites could be pilot tested. The pilot test could give insight into the transferability of stories from one set of participants to another and also provide detail as to the level of difficulty of the books created at these sites. In addition to the 18 books created at the Funanani sites, existing wordless books were also included, namely:

- *Abongi's journey* (2004) by Kerry Saadien-Raad and Tania Rosser;

- *A very nice day* (2006), illustrated by Natalie Hinrichsen with concept by Anne Walton;

- *One starry night* (2011) by Geoff Walton;

- *The rainbow birds* (2001) by Piet Grobler;

- *1,2,3* by Diek Grobler.

Diek Grobler's *1,2,3* was used as a backup, as access to other wordless picturebooks for this site proved difficult. *Abongi's Journey* is now out of print, and neither Biblionef nor other stored or online platforms had it in stock. *Max*, which proved popular in the previous two sites was also not in stock and was only available as an e-book from other online retailers.

All data collection took place at the Happy Sabby Day Care centre. On days when the weather was good, a quiet outside space under some shade netting was made available for the focus groups. However, bad weather forced two of the data collection sessions to move indoors to the reception area of the daycare centre. This area was between the classrooms and was very noisy, which made audio recordings and focus group conversations difficult. To overcome this, the researcher made extensive notes during the focus groups and on the spot member checks were done to make sure that the information conveyed by participants was heard and understood correctly.

5.4.2.1 Phase 1: Introduction and focus group

As with the previous two sites, the initial session served as a means to introduce the researcher and reading programme to the participants and was held on 3 March 2016 at the day care centre. The informed consent form was discussed with the assistance of a translator; participants were encouraged to ask questions about the reading programme. Due to the fact that the research did not conduct any interviews or have contact with any of the participants' children, informed consent was only sought from the parents/primacy caregivers. The unit of analysis for this site is consequently only that of parent/primary caregiver.

After the focus group, participants were each provided with two of the wordless picturebooks created at the Mamelodi and Shoshanguve sites to take home with them. They were invited for a follow-up interview and asked to return the books and exchange them for other books at the next session. Participants were asked if they preferred to meet individually or in a group, and consequently a follow-up focus group was arranged, again with the aim of having two smaller groups.

5.4.2.2 *Phase 2: Follow-up focus groups*

Over a period of nine weeks, three follow-up focus groups were held at the centre. The time frame of these needed to be adjusted to fit in with the Easter holidays, the day care centre's terms and also allow for unforeseen circumstances such as bad weather. Participants opted for a focus group, so that they could discuss and compare their experiences and perceptions of the wordless picturebook in the group. The group context seemed to be important for them. The final focus group was hosted on 5 May 2016 and also served as a means to conclude the programme and debrief participants. They were again encouraged to ask any questions or provide suggestions for a way forward. They were provided with the researcher's contact details and asked to make contact[67] should they have any questions or comments to add in the future. Focus groups were recorded where possible and transcribed. Written notes were also taken during focus groups (Creswell, 2014).

5.4.3   Field notes and audit trail

An audit trail is described by Cohen and Crabtree (2006) as a "transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings".   For the duration of the research, the researcher kept a written account of what was done during the study. These written accounts also note observations during focus groups or interviews, timelines and reflections on the research process. This data is used to explain possible reasons for patterns emerging in the data. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) write that field notes can be taken when "observing a culture, a setting or social situation". These notes are created by the researcher to help recall events and to "record the behaviours, activities, events and other features of the setting being observed".

5.5   CAPTURING THE DATA

Focus groups and interviews were audio-recorded (with permission from participants) using a voice recorder and then transcribed (Creswell, 2014). These recordings were stored on the researcher's laptop, which is password-protected and locked away when unattended. The researcher is the only

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[67] This was never done at the participant's own expense. Rather, a system was set up where the participant could "miss call" or send the researcher a "please call me" notification, and they would be contacted by the researcher on her account.

person who has access to this data, and the data has been stored using codes to protect participant identities. Transcription involves the translation of spoken language into written language. The transcription should be thorough and meticulous, clearly identifying who is speaking, what is said and include non-semantic sounds that were made by any participants, such as laughter (Braun & Clark 2013: 162–163). Participants were coded according to site, namely S for Shoshanguve, M for Mamelodi and D for the Melutis Squatter Camp (as it is located just outside of Danville). Data was stored in such a manner that participants could not be identified by their code. Additional notes were also made during the data collection process and used in collaboration with the transcribed data. Field notes and an audit trail was kept for the duration of the study (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Data from the story collection workshops hosted at Shoshanguve and Mamelodi sites were scanned from the original documents and stored electronically in files which corresponded with participant codes. All data was stored electronically on an external hard drive and stored in the researcher's house. The hard drive is kept in a safe in the house, and every precaution has been taken to protect participant identities. Data will be erased five years after the acceptance of this thesis.

5.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical clearance for the study was granted by the Department of Visual Art's Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) on 20 November 2014. Research was voluntary (Trochim 2006) and the rights of participants were protected at all time. Participants signed the informed consent forms, and were provided with copies of their forms. The consent forms were discussed in the introduction phase of the research and a translator was available to translate anything of which the participants were unsure. Participants were informed about the procedures and risks involved in research (Trochim, 2006). Emphasis was placed on the voluntary nature of the research and the fact that they could withdraw from the research at any time, without any repercussions in terms of their, or their child's, relationship with the researcher, Stellenbosch University or the ECD/day care centre where their child was enrolled. At the Shoshanguve and Mamelodi sites, assent forms were given to the parents. If the children were old enough to sign their own forms, they did so. In cases where children were too young, or could not sign his or her names, the parent signed on their behalf. Again, participants were informed that their children had the same rights as they did and did not have to participate in the programme if they did not want to. Children could individually decide to withdraw from the research at any stage without any negative implication regarding their placement at the ECD or day care centre, or their relationships with any of the centre's employees. All participants were provided with the

researcher's contact details, as well as a contact at Stellenbosch University, should they wish to express any concern during or after the reading project.

Participants were assured that identifying information will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the study, with the exception of their own wordless books, which included their names as the authors on their books. Participants were also given the option to not have their names included in their books should they prefer, although none of the participants chose this option. Participants received no payment for participation, but were invited to keep all books that were used in the study, with the exception of books produced by other participants.

5.7   DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis, briefly defined as the "...non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships" (Babbie, in Schurink, Fouché & De Vos 2011: 399), was used for this study. Thematic analysis, defined by Braun and Clarke (2013: 120) as "a method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data" was used as the data analysis technique.

The process of data analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke, 2006 (in Braun & Clarke, 2013: 121) was used throughout the process of thematic data analysis in this study; namely, reading and familiarising, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing the report. After the transcription of the data, the researcher familiarises him or herself with the data. This is common to all forms of qualitative analysis. The data collected during this study was initially sorted using open coding; namely, naming and classifying data through a close examination. These parts were then compared for similarities and differences and questions were asked about the phenomena reflected by the data. Prominent or recurring ideas or language and patterns of belief that link people and themes together can then be identified through detailed attention to the data content. Themes were then searched for using the codes and all relevant, coded data were collated to each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2013: 121).

Themes were carefully reviewed, taking into consideration whether they worked in relation to the coded extracts and the full data set and also if they are reflective of the data that was gathered (Braun & Clarke 2013: 234). Subsequently, themes were defined and named in a coherent manner (Braun & Clarke 2013: 258). Lastly, the research was written up, taking into consideration the research audit trail and field notes. The final analysis should represent the perception of all participants (Braun & Clarke 2013: 252). Creswell (2014) writes that qualitative data analysis proceeds in conjunction with

other facets of the emerging qualitative study, such as a researcher's written memos which may be included as a narrative in the final report.

Krueger and Neuman (in Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011: 415) suggest a process of evaluating how things which are *not in the data* could be important for analysis; for example, as an additional means to consider the data, the working conditions or health of the parents and other family members need to be taken into account in this study.

5.8   TRUSTWORTHINESS

Lincoln and Guba (in Cohen & Crabtree, 2006) suggest that trustworthiness of a research study involves establishing: credibility (in preference to internal validity); transferability (in preference to external validity/generalisability), dependability (in preference to reliability) and confirmability (in preference to objectivity) (Cohen & Crabtree 2006; Shenton, 2003: 64).

5.8.1   Credibility

Issues of credibility ask: "How congruent are the findings with reality?" (Shenton, 2003: 64) This is arguably one of the most important factors in ensuring the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Credibility establishes if research findings embody believable information from the participants' original data, and if the interpretation of the data is in line with participant's original views (Anney 2016: 276, citing Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Within this study, member checking, triangulation and peer examination were used and will be elaborated on in the following paragraphs.

Peer debriefing (Guba 1981, in Anney, 2014: 276) was done with the support from professionals who were willing to provide scholarly guidance, firstly in the form of the researcher's supervisor and co-supervisor from Stellenbosch University. In addition to this, on completion of the study, peer debriefing was conducted with two social workers from the Funanani centres, specifically the Mamelodi centre manager and the Chief Executive Officer of the trust. The findings of the study were also presented at the ACLALS 2016 conference in Stellenbosch and subjected to questions from other academics in the humanities fields. Feedback provided by all involved allowed the researcher to challenge assumptions in the study, which may have been overlooked due to the closeness to the project (Shenton, 2004: 67).

Site triangulation (Shenton, 2004: 66) for this study was achieved by through the use of three research sites, one of which is independently run and overseen by a different NGO than the other sites. Further,

triangulation was established by using different data collection methods (Shenton, 2004: 66). This study made use of focus groups, group interviews and individual interviews for the data collection. Lastly, the collection of data from different sites, at different points in time (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006) and using a similar qualitative method can be seen as a means to increase credibility of the study. The research at Happy Sabby Day Care was conducted four months after the conclusion of the research at the first two sites. The rollout of the programme did differ here, with a story collection workshop not being hosted. This is taken into consideration in the discussion of findings.

During focus groups and interviews (individual or group), member checking was done both "on the spot" during an interview and also at the end of an interview (Shenton, 2004: 68; Guba, 1981: 85, in Anney 2014: 277). These checks related to the accuracy of what the participant was saying, and also if the researcher was interpreting it correctly. Participants were given an opportunity to listen to their interviews or to request a transcript of the interviews should they wish. This was particularly the case with academics and publishers that provided personal communication for the study. Iterative questioning was used, both during initial and follow-up interviews, in which the researcher returned to items previously mentioned by an informant and extracted related data through rephrased questions (Shenton 2004: 66). Where contradictions emerged, it was noted in the research report and field notes and audit trails were consulted to find possible reasons for discrepancies.

5.8.2   Transferability

Transferability of a study is equivalent to generalisability and refers to the extent to which results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents (Anney 2014: 277, cites Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004). In an effort to achieve this, the context of the research, including broader considerations, were described in depth in what Lincoln and Guba (in Cohen & Crabtree, 2006) refer to as "thick description".

5.8.3   Dependability

Dependability holds the research accountable for accurately reporting the processes utilised throughout the research process (Shenton, 2004: 71). A detailed audit trail was also kept for the duration of the research, which included data, research notes and memos, and researcher reflections during and after the research process. The aforementioned peer debriefing also contributed to the study's dependability (Lietz & Zayas 2010: 198).

5.8.4   Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba's (1995, in Cohen & Crabtree, 2006) last evaluative criteria within trustworthiness and confirmability refers to the degree to which a study's findings are shaped by the respondents, rather than researcher bias, motivation or interest. Researcher reflexivity is one of the ways to describe enhancing the confirmability of a study, and takes into consideration the researcher's own background and position. Reflexivity involves a critical deliberation of the researcher's own standpoint through reflection, which can be done by keeping a journal and participating in discussions with peers (Lietz & Zayas 2010: 198). As previously noted, peer debriefing was conducted with several peers and the research supervisors, which allowed the researcher to reflect on her position in the research, as well as her communication of the findings.

Throughout the study, the researcher made notes of thoughts and feelings, and allowed for critical thought on any bias that might occur during the research process. As noted earlier, the researcher is a white, South African female, who lives in very different circumstances to those of the research participants. Her position can be viewed firstly as a position of privilege, as she grew up in a family in which reading was an important and nurturing activity, and in which there was adequate financial means to provide appropriate reading and learning materials. Secondly, the researcher's position needs to be considered as a position of power, as research in the social sciences in based on human interaction (Das, 2009). During this interaction, human relationships are built and are central in qualitative research. This frequently includes interviews in which participants are asked to respond to personal questions. Das (2009), citing Gottfried (1996), notes that "[t]he process of conducting enquiry based on relationships introduces issues of power where the researcher-researched relationship is also guided by larger social structures". When considering the history of the country and the legacy of apartheid, the researcher's identity as a white person working with black participants needs to be acknowledged and carefully negotiated. At all times, respect for cultural differences were shown, and at no time was any prescription given to participants in terms of *how* to use the books or *when* to use the books. Assumptions in terms of relevant content for participants were also not made and the storytelling workshop was an integral aspect of the research. It aimed to empower participants and allow for them to tell their own stories in a manner that suited them. Nal'iBali's facilitation of the workshops also served as an attempt not to ascribe any specific culture to the reading process. The Nal'iBali facilitators were from different racial and cultural backgrounds and spoke the same language as many of the participants.

Power and empowerment are important aspects of the research. Through the selection of a participative action research design, both researcher and participants contributed to the research and

were involved in decision making; such as the structure of the data collection, planning future sessions and discussion and decisions pertaining to steps to be taken after the research. However, the risk of participants responding in ways that "please" the researcher, rather than reporting on their true experience, still exists. Throughout the research, participants were encouraged to be honest about how they experienced using the wordless picturebooks. Although feedback seemed to be very positive, careful attention was paid to avoid asking leading questions or to interrogate participants during interviews. Careful attention was also given to the voice of the participants; every effort has been made to represent their responses in a neutral and respectful manner. In an effort to practise reflexive research, participant actions will be reflected on in terms of power relationships within the research in the findings.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As noted in the previous chapter, three reading programmes in total were hosted at three research sites in Tshwane, between September 2015 and May 2016. The reading programmes were hosted as a means to collect primary data with regard to how wordless picturebooks can be used in the South African home. They were conducted in low literacy areas in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. In addition, participants created picturebooks as resources to be used in the study.

The focus of this chapter is on the analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data collected from the participants who took part in the reading programmes. The researcher first discusses the implementation of the reading programme and takes into consideration participant retention and attendance. The discussion of the story collection workshop, facilitated by Nal'iBali, focuses on the structure of the workshop as well as feedback received from participants during the story collection at Funanani Trust's Shoshanguve and Mamelodi sites. Thereafter, the implementation of the programme in the Melutsi Township, which served as a means to pilot test the books created at the previous sites, is outlined before the chapter presents the research findings. The findings are organised around themes. These themes are discussed in relation to relevant theory; in particular, in relation to the concept of "Design" (New London Group, 1996, 2000) as used in multiliteracies.

6.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE READING PROGRAMMES

The reading programmes were discussed in depth in the methodology chapter. However, it may be useful to reflect on certain aspects of the implementation of the programme to allow for a greater understanding of some of the findings. In this section, participant retention at all three sites is specifically discussed and the reception of the story collection workshops hosted at the Shoshanguve and Mamelodi sites are reflected on.

6.2.1 Funanani Research Sites: Shoshanguve and Mamelodi

The first two reading programmes were hosted at Funanani's Shoshanguve and Mamelodi centres and started on 21 and 22 September 2015, respectively.

6.2.1.1 Participants

Each participant pair consisted of a parent/primary caregiver and their three to six-year-old child who was enrolled at one of the ECD centres. Initial numbers of participant pairs at Shoshanguve and Mamelodi were 14 and 12, respectively. However, participant retention was low and many participants did not attend all sessions or stopped attending after the initial focus groups. An overview of the participant attendance is portrayed in Table 6.1 .

Table 6.1: Participant overview for research sites 1 and 2

Research Site	Shoshanguve	Mamelodi
Participant pairs who started the programme	14	12
Completed all sessions	7	2
Attended two or more sessions	4	3
Attended only first session (focus group)	3	6
Books created	13	5

Table 6.1 provides an overview of participant attendance over the duration of the six-week programme. Week 1 started with all participants present. Six participants in Mamelodi and three in Shoshanguve only attended the initial focus group. Consequently, they did not take part in the story collection workshop and were not provided with books to take home. In Shoshanguve, seven participants attended all sessions, whereas in Mamelodi only two attended every session. Parents who missed one session would often make plans to attend the next one and continue with the programme. However, some of them did not return after missing one session and only returned to collect their books from the story collection workshop. Reasons for non-attendance varied from illness to work opportunities; these are discussed in depth in the contextual factors of the study. In summary, at these two sites, data on the history of reading in the home was collected from 26 participant pairs, and data pertaining to the reading experience after the implementation of the programme was collected from 18 participants.

6.2.1.2 Story collection workshops facilitated by Nal'iBali

A story collection workshop was held on 1 and 2 October 2015 at the Shoshanguve and Mamelodi sites, respectively. Workshops were divided into morning and afternoon sessions, lasting up to three hours and consisting of a maximum of six participant pairs in each. Keeping the groups smaller meant that the Nal'iBali facilitators had more time to spend with each participant pair and assist with translating or documenting stories.

The story collection workshops followed a set structure, with the Nal'iBali facilitators starting the sessions by introducing themselves to participants and explaining the reason they were there.

Thereafter, participants were asked to stand in a circle and during an ice breaker activity, each had a turn to introduce themselves and do a quick dance for the group (referred to as a "jiggle"). After the introductions, the facilitators read a picturebook to the participants and encouraged participant engagement by asking questions or opinions from both the adults and the children. On completing this, the facilitators had a short discussion about reading and about Nal'iBali's vision and mission. Participants were then invited to create their own stories, as outlined in the discussion of the research methodology in Chapter 5. The facilitators and researcher were available to assist parents who were not confident with writing. The facilitators also assisted in translating stories from mother tongue to English, although a number of parents did write the stories in English. After a session, the stories were collected. The workshop ended with participants being given two existing wordless picturebooks to take home with them. Appointments were made for follow-up interviews after two weeks, at a time that suited participants.

At both sites, all participants enjoyed the song and dance, and the parents specifically seemed to enjoy the read-aloud, engaging with the Nal'iBali facilitators and giving their opinions on the stories. As a means of starting the story creation, the facilitators suggested a number of ways that the parents could use to create their own stories. One of these was to allow the child to draw and then to ask them questions about the drawing (emergent writing techniques). All of the parents chose this method, although other options, such as song and dance, acting and collage were also available. Parents and children started the activity together, but the children tended to became distracted and focused on what their friends were drawing, to the extent that some copying that occurred. Parents reported that they enjoyed writing a stories by looking at their child's pictures and writing what they (the parents) thought. Two workshops were hosted at each site, but as no one arrived for the afternoon session in Mamelodi, it was cancelled. In total, three workshops were held.

The drawings and written stories collected from the research sites were scanned and grouped by the researcher. The researcher illustrated the majority of the books herself, with four books being illustrated by other illustrators who volunteered their services. In the cases where illustrations were outsourced, participant names were removed from the original drawings and stories and were added by the researcher during the desktop publishing phase of the book production. Illustrators were briefed to use the participant drawings to respectfully represent the story and not overly embellish with detail that was not originally included in participant stories.

A total of 18[68] books were produced from the story collection workshop and care was taken to include an element of the child's artwork in each book. As described in the research methodology, the remainder of the programme involved the circulation of existing wordless picturebooks, and for the last week of the programme, the participant-authored wordless picturebooks were circulated.

6.2.1.3 Melutsi Township

The reading programme at the Happy Sabby Day Care in the Melutsi Township took place between 3 March and 5 May 2016.

6.2.1.4 Participants

Only parents were approached to take part in this study, and although the reading programme involved reading books at home with their children, the children were not included in the interviews. The Melutsi Township presented several difficulties in terms of participant retention, as observed in Table 6.2 below. Participant attendance and retention for the site was unpredictable throughout the reading programme.

Table 6.2: Participant overview for research site 3

Research Site	Melutsi Squatter Camp
Participants who started the programme (parents/primary caregivers)	19 7 (from the second session
Completed all sessions	6
Attended two or more sessions	10
Attended only first session (focus group)	13

During the recruitment of participants for the research at this site, 12 parents expressed interest in the study. However, on arrival at the research site, 19 participants had arrived for the programme. Because the community has little access to basic resources and many of the parents are unemployed, it was decided that no one could be turned away from the study. As a result, the introduction, informed consent form discussion and translation, and the initial focus groups were held in two smaller groups.

Bad weather meant that the second focus group needed to be postponed. Heavy rains made it impossible to host the focus group under the shaded netting at the day care centre. Management advised that they felt the reception area was too small to accommodate all participants comfortably. This delay in the programme could account for poor participant retention after the first session. Only

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[68]One parent has twins and she assists each of them creating a story and creates two books, which accounts for the discrepancy in participant numbers, compared to the number of books created.

six of the 19 participants who attended the first session, attended the second focus group. However, as news of the programme had circulated through the community, seven new participants joined the session. Only 10 participants attended two or more sessions, and the final focus group consisted of only six participants who had attended all the sessions. Contextual factors that could have contributed to participant attendance are discussed in the research findings in section below. In summary, data on the history of reading in the home was collected from 19 participants, and data pertaining to the reading experience after the implementation of the programme was collected from 13 participants.

6.3   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The focus of this section is on the presentation and interpretation of the qualitative data collected from the participants who took part in the research. The discussion of the research findings will be integrated with the theoretical framework and literature review – as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively – and will be supported with direct quotes by the participants.

The research findings will be discussed in two main sections. In Section 6.3.1, the researcher will present the findings based on the data obtained from the focus group interviews before the participants were exposed to the reading programme. The findings based on the data collected from the focus group interviews after the completion of the reading programme, will be discussed in Section 6.3.2. As similar themes in the data were noted across all three research sites, the data obtained from the participants in the three sites will be discussed together, with the exception of themes related to the participant-created books, which are discussed as pertaining to research Sites 1 and 2 only. Codes will be used to distinguish between participants in the respective sites, with code "S" indicating participants from Shoshanguve, "M" to those from Mamelodi participants and "D" to the participants from Melutsi Township.

6.3.1   Participants' reading context prior to exposure to the reading programme

Initial focus group interviews at all research sites sought to establish the reading context of the participants. If we take the organising principle of design as a starting point, one could say that the initial focus group aimed to establish the "available resources" – the accessible meaning-making resources – and patterns and conventions of meaning found in a specific cultural context (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008: 203). In particular, the researcher wanted to establish what kinds of reading resources were available. From data collected at different parts of the process, other available resources emerged and these will be discussed under the process of designing. The researcher was interested in gaining information on the reading context that the participants had been exposed to in their

childhoods and also in their current homes. The initial focus group interviews were conducted with 12 parents from Mamelodi, 14 from Shoshanguve, and 19[69] from the Melutsi Township, totalling 45 adult participants (children were not included in this initial data collection). The themes that emerged from these three focus groups related to the participants' culture of reading at home, books in the home, their current reading routines and frequency of reading, their current experience of reading in the home and their attitudes towards reading. These themes will be discussed in this section.

6.3.1.1 Culture of reading at home

The first sub-theme that emerged from the initial focus group interviews was that of the absence of a culture or reading in the participants' childhood homes. The majority of participants reported that they did not grow up with a culture of reading in their childhood homes. Most of the participants related this situation to the fact that their parents worked in the cities while, as children, they remained with their grandparents in rural areas. Participant S6 mentioned: "There was no time like this, where we have enough time to spend with our parents. They were staying there in town and we were staying in the rural areas, so, we never had time". A number of the participants stated that their parents were unable to read and write, and that they themselves subsequently only learned to read when they started their schooling.

It can be argued that most of the participants grew up during the Apartheid era of South Africa, which spanned from 1948 to 1994, a time when pass laws were in place that permitted "those who were considered economically useful – mainly men of working age and some female domestic workers – to remain in the towns and cities while they were employed" (Hall & Posel, 2012: 44). Hall and Posel (2012: 44) write that little research has focused on how the spatial arrangements promoted by Apartheid continue to affect the quality of life and opportunities for children who are growing up in post-Apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, during the Apartheid era, the so-called Bantu Education system was said to be an inferior quality of education, while many children were simply not attending school, as it was not compulsory for black children to do so (Atmore, 2013: 153). The discoursal *experience* of the participants (The New London Group, 2000: 20) is such that they did not really engage with reading from a young age. The fact that participants' parents did not live at home and were unable to spend time reading or telling them stories could have impacted their own development of a culture of reading.

Of all the participants, only one had a parent who had shared reading activities with her. This participant mentioned: "My dad used to read me stories. I enjoyed it. Once I started Grade 1, that's when he started to bring me books for me to read by myself and for me to read bedtime stories" (M8).

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[69] Split into two smaller groups, as noted earlier.

The participant adopted this behaviour in her own household and reads stories with her daughter every evening before bedtime. This participant was herself also an active reader and was the only participant who owned books (excluding magazines and the Bible). She was the youngest in all three groups and was enrolled at college. The findings are in support of literature that indicates that parents who consider reading important and engage in reading activities with their children will generally influence their children to feel the same (Tiemensma, 2008: 51, 60). Parents who were exposed to reading as children can pass a culture of reading on to their children.

6.3.1.2 Books in the home

The majority of the participants did not have books or reading material in their homes and when present, they were mostly in the form of the Bible or magazines. *Drum* and *Move* magazines were the most mentioned items and they were mostly for the parents' use, rather than reading material that was available for the children. A limited number of participants reported that they had one or two books at home and one participant often read the newspaper.

Participants with older children noted that their children occasionally brought books home from school. Participant S1 noted that she was "reading another book from my sister's daughter from Grade 1". Some participants had older children who were enrolled in a primary school (Grades 1 or 2) who would occasionally bring books home. Other participants had much older children, aged 12 and upwards, who would sometimes read with the younger children in the home. Educational books can be used in the home for reading. However, books with a specifically educational purpose which are thus produced in an "educational fashion" may unwittingly perpetuate the idea that reading is for strictly educational purposes (Van Heerden, 2008) and that the reading activity must have a specific set of outcomes. In an environment where reading for pleasure is not a common activity, especially with young children who are being exposed to books for the first time, this may present difficulties. Grade 1 and 2 reading material may not be appropriate for pre-school children and books designed for educational purposes may, at this stage, be too advanced for a younger child to deal with. Louw and Louw (2014: 177) emphasise the use of age appropriate books in scaffolding children's mastery of reading.

Only two participants (S1 and D26) indicated that they took their children to the library. Participant D26 noted that their library had been closed for some time and the next nearest one was not within walking distance; therefore, he had not been there in a while. Participant S1 would borrow "Bible books" from the library, as Bible stories were familiar to her and she therefore chose these to read with her children. Participant S10 also said that the Bible (in book form) played a big role in her reading practices with her children. It is evident that the discoursal experience of the parents played a role as

they made intertextual connections to texts that were familiar to them (New London Group, 2000: 20).

Only one participant indicated that she purchased books specifically for her children. This was incidentally the same participant who grew up reading bedtime stories with her parents. She reported that she read with her own child every evening. Her situation is an indication that parents' emphasis on reading and the importance of books influences how reading is viewed in the future households of their children. Four parents indicated that they had books in the home and that they themselves enjoyed reading, even though their parents had not read with them when they were growing up. The above findings indicate that the participants adopted different reading practices in their homes.

6.3.1.3 Current reading routine

Although some participants had reading material at home, they indicated that they did not really read with their younger children. Participants who did read at home, did so with their older, school-going children, who would bring books home from school. Participant M1 stated: "I read with her sister [be]cause her sister is in Grade 2, so I started reading with her (the sister) from last year. Before, I wasn't reading with her but now I do. But myself, I read. I've got books." The participants who did read to their preschool children did not do so on a regular basis. The frequency of joint reading with their three- to six-year-old child at home ranged from no reading at all to three times a week. The majority of parents reported that they would "sometimes" or "maybe once a week" read with their pre-school children. Only two participants (S11 and M8) indicated that they read with their children three times per week. The research findings thus indicate that although some parent-child reading occurred at home, it was of a low frequency and tended to be with their school-aged children. Research indicates that that South Africans generally view reading as an educational activity, rather than something done in the home for enjoyment (Du Plessis in Van Heerden, 2008; Du Plessis, 2016).

Furthermore, it transpired that reading with pre-school children did not always occur with the parent or primary caregiver's involvement. In the Melutsi Township group, the majority of the parents indicated that they do not read at home with their children. However, this statement changed over the weeks of the research, as parents would refer to reading at home with their child. At this site, it was therefore difficult to establish how many parents did indeed read at home with their children, as opposed to how many did not; and how many changed their answers based on the fact that the books were being sent home to read and they would report reading these with their children.

Based on the discussion above, the findings of this study highlight the fact that, even if participants enjoyed reading themselves, be it in the form of magazines or books, reading with their child is not emphasised until the child is of school-going age. Although the parent models reading behaviour

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(McLeod, 2011), the child is not included in the activity of reading for enjoyment, but only in reading for educational purposes based on access to books that are meant for or have been provided by the school. Similar to the findings in a study by Seden (2007: 137), books and reading are not necessarily embedded in the participants' views of parenting activities, but is something that is done by parents on their own. This situation could be ascribed to what Tiemensma (2008: 62) refers as parents being uninformed about their roles in supporting their children's literacy development.

Interestingly, participants who had older, school-going children reported that these children would read with their younger siblings. One participant mentioned that "I have the 13-year-old … every time that they bring a book [a book from school] ... that's when he reads for the little one" (S8). Another participant (S3) also noted that "[s]ometimes my daughter, she gives [them] some poetry. So she teaches the younger sister". Reasons given for older children reading with the younger ones were that they "enjoyed it" and that this activity was not prompted by a parent or primary caregiver. This type of scaffolding behaviour (Lilly & Green, 2012) then happens between siblings, rather than between parent and child. Modelling by older siblings can be valuable in the home for establishing a reading culture.

Noteworthy in this research is participant reaction to the distribution of the wordless picturebooks in the Melutsi Township, which was done at the end of the focus group. Participants were each given two of the participant-created wordless books to take home with them. At this stage, there was some friction noted in the group, as some parents became upset that other parents were given books before they were and thought that they were being allowed to choose which books they took. Some participants wanted to take three books and tried to hide the number they had with them. It was explained to participants that the books needed to be circulated so that everyone could have a chance to read them. Another interesting aspect was that the orange squash drink that was provided for participants was the highlight of the session for a lot of the parents – they commented on how nice the refreshments were. The researcher discussed this with the crèche owner, who mentioned that the participants were not used to juice or refreshments; that would be a possible reason for their focus on these elements of the session, rather than the books.

Although not related to the books, I believe this indicated the dire conditions that a lot of parents are facing in daily life. Limited access to resources is a reality that they negotiate on a daily basis and books are very often simply not affordable in their households. These events also indicate the importance of choice that some participants emphasised. They wanted to be able to select a book themselves rather than being given one, regardless of the fact that the rotation schedule would have allowed each participant to read all of the books on offer. Choice as a factor that empowers participants should subsequently be kept in mind for book rotations in future studies; participants should perhaps be

allowed to choose which books they read. Limited copies of books and unpredicted participant numbers made this difficult during this programme, but indicates that funds will need to be set aside to ensure all possibilities are accommodated.

6.3.1.4 Experience of reading at home

A theme that emerged from the research findings was that, prior to starting the reading programme, the participants experienced that reading with their three- to six-year-old children at home presented both challenges and opportunities. It appears that for some participants, current reading practices at home were motivated by homework assignments of school-going children. In speaking about reading activities, Participant S2 referred to her child in Grade 1, stating: "She says 'mum my teacher says we should analyse this story and make 5 sentences out of it.' So I help her."

Some participants expressed frustration at the younger child's inability to focus on or engage with the school books, whereas others appreciated that the younger children "pretend" to read and understand what they are "reading." Participant M1 appreciated her daughter's effort in pretending to read and mentioned in this regard:

> She does [read] but then she pretends she is reading but you can see she is interested in the pictures and she holds the book upside down. But you can see she tries to mimic what I'm doing – and another book when her sister and I are busy, she'll look at what we're saying, but, not so good.

A number of the participants discussed their frustration about their younger children's inability to concentrate on reading books. Participant S2 echoed the sentiment of these participants:

They want to play. You can take them a book and tell them 'let's read a book' like the Bible or another one, or say 'let's look at this picture' and they will say 'Mama, I want to play. What is this? No, let's play this.'

Participant S3 agreed, saying the following: "The problem is they mostly don't concentrate when you read. We read and they want to tear the book, the pages. And they don't concentrate, that's the problem". Another participant (M8) noted that her child was sometimes so "stubborn" that she refused to read, with the result that she had "to force her and sit down with her." Participant S1 complained about her son's inability to concentrate. She was the mother of twins – a boy and a girl. She made an effort to read with them at home, going to the library to get them books, but reported that her son struggled to concentrate during reading.

In terms of the levels of frustration expressed by the participants, it is worth noting the views of Landry, Smith, Swank, Zucker, Crawford and Solari (2011: 971) on the climate in which reading in the home takes place: "Though less often studied than cognitive and linguistic aspects of shared reading,

evidence suggests that given a responsive affective-emotional climate during shared reading, the child is more likely to demonstrate attention to text and enthusiasm for the reading experience, to cooperate with the mother's requests and to be read to more frequently."

Furthermore, it seems that there was a belief among some participants that there is a 'right' or 'wrong' way to read, and that their younger children were currently not reading as 'correctly' as the older, school-going children. In this sense, the scaffolding role of the parent comes into play. If reading causes frustration at home due to the use of materials that do not allow for proper scaffolding, the child may develop a sense of learned helplessness. Berk (2013: 465) describes preschool children as "learning optimists" who have high expectations of success. However, repeated failure at a task and continuous negative feedback may lead to a helpless orientation where they tend to give up on a task without really trying (Berk, 2013: 465; Louw & Louw, 2014: 239). Children who develop a belief that they cannot read or that reading is simply difficult, tend to avoid the activity altogether as a means of avoiding failure or negative criticism.

Most of the participants mentioned circumstantial aspects that affected the home as the environment in which reading takes place.

6.3.1.5 The reading environment

The research findings indicate that most of the participants experienced circumstances which negatively affected their ability for joint parent-child reading at home. Two themes that were identified in this regard were a lack of time and a lack of access to books in the home.

Most of the participants were single mothers or grandmothers who headed the household. They identified a lack of time as a factor that made reading difficult at home. Participants mentioned that after a day at work, cleaning, cooking and washing, they were too tired to read with their children. Many of the participants were unemployed, and relied on unpredictable "piece work" for an income. Participant M3 explained that "[y]ou have lots to do in the day, and then the laundry, and then you are tired", with M2 adding:

> You have to cook and wash and clean everything. So when it is time for you to sit down with your kid and read, you find out you are tired. And when you have the time to sit down and read, you find out it's too late, it's time for bed.

In South Africa, there is a high prevalence of families headed by single parents and females, with 40% of households headed by a single parent, and 40% of these being female headed households (Department of Social Development, 2013: 19). The Department of Social Development (2013: 19) notes that female headed households are at an increased risk for poverty because of limited access to social and economic resources – such as property – and the additional financial costs of childrearing.

The findings of the study portray how these barriers can extend to parenting capabilities, when parents need to prioritise day-to-day chores over activities such as reading with their children.

Access to books also featured among the main challenges to reading at home; this was experienced by most of the participants. When discussing access to books, Participant S3 noted: "[n]o, I don't have. Sometimes we look at magazines and analyse the pictures together." The proximity of a library also proved to be a challenge to the majority of the participants, with the result that they did not view the library as a viable resource for reading materials. Only one participant in the study sample frequented a library. Access to books is an integral part of developing a culture of reading (Pretorius, 2015: 72). In order to develop a love of reading, children require access to books to practice reading and, in addition, need exposure to the modelling of what skilful reading entails through a parent or an older sibling who initiates storybook reading (Pretorius, 2015: 72).

Lack of access to books points to the reality of the socio-economic situation with which the participants are faced, with the majority of low SES populations needing to prioritise food and transport above the 'luxury' of having books in the home. Limited access to books, however, has negative implications for the development of a reading culture, as was demonstrated in Nassimbeni and Desmond's (2011) study on the availability of books as a factor in reading. Early access to books is essential in developing this culture of reading, as a love for books develops at an early age and it is critical "to get books in children's hands" (Neuman, 1999, in Nassimbeni & Desmond 2011: 101).

Dexter and Stacks (2014: 396) emphasise the influence of the family's socio-economic status on reading in the home by stating the following:

> [children] learn about the importance of reading in the home. … Research indicates that the experiences and interactions a child is exposed to within the HLE are greatly impacted by a family's socioeconomic status (SES).

Despite their circumstantial challenges, most of the participants supported the importance of reading and the benefits it could have for people.

6.3.1.6 Attitudes towards reading

Regardless of their own reading habits and the challenges they experience in terms of time and the availability of books in the home, all the participants regarded reading as important. Some of the participants reported that they observed a change in their school-going children after they were introduced to books. Most of the participants alluded to the educational functions of reading, such as increasing knowledge or enhancing communication. Responses ranged from "because maybe you can learn many things from reading" (M8), to "it refreshes your mind" (M3) and "to give you advice" (M4). The emphasis on the outcome of reading and the educational benefits that it offered participants and

their children is reflected in the findings of a study by Nassimbeni and Desmond (2011: 101), where reading was linked to "the acquisition of knowledge, the development of skills related to reading and writing, the passing of examinations."

Participant S10 was of the opinion that it was important for children to start reading before school. She said:

> [B]ecause I think if you can get your kids, if they don't enjoy to go to school, they will struggle. But if you show them the book before and they have it at home they can get excited and want to see the one from the teacher.

The above comment has important links in terms of recognition of achievement motivation in children. Participant S10 is aware of the importance that children need to have positive experiences of success in order to "get excited" and motivated to read at school. The preschool age is particularly important in nurturing achievement motivation in children, since children around the age of three years begin to give up trying when faced with tasks that are too challenging (Berk, 2006: 425). The evaluations of reading that children receive at home, before they go to school, can positively contribute in developing "mastery-oriented attributions" (Louw & Louw, 2014: 239). Dexter and Stacks (2014: 396) indicate the importance of supporting reading by young children in the home: "Although the process of learning to read for most children does not begin until formal schooling, most learn about the importance of reading in the home." However, although the participants were aware of the importance of reading, some even mentioning the importance of reading *before* school-going age, it is recognised that parents often do not understand their own roles in their children's development of a love of reading (Tiemensma, 2008: 62).

6.3.1.7 Discussion of findings

The information in this section was obtained during the initial focus group. The participants were invited to attend the storytelling workshop the following week (refer Section 6.2 on the implementation of the reading programme).

The findings from these initial focus groups were largely in line with the literature discussed Chapter 4, in that many of the parents face economic and social barriers that negatively affected reading in the home. Access to books in the household were limited, with very few parents making use of libraries to source books for their children. Although participants recognised reading as important for educational purposes, the books as "cultural good" was not prominent in their responses. One possible reason for this is again Professor Brown's (2016) notion of "one of the legacies of Apartheid", in that, with the exception of one participant, the participants did not have a reading history in their childhood homes, which they attributed to the fact that they grew up separately from their parents.

Another prominent theme in the findings is parents' lack of awareness of age-appropriate books for reading with their children, with many of them using magazines, the Bible or the school books of their older, school-going children. These reading materials were above the developmental capacities of the pre-school children. The use of these reading materials could be attributed to lack of access to books. However, the participants' expression of frustration in reading with their children suggests that they expected their children to be able to concentrate while reading books designed for older children. The participants' recognition of the need for children to read in the preschool years was strongly associated with the educational outcomes of reading, rather than that of reading for enjoyment, or personal development (van Heerden, 2008; du Plessis, 2016; Nassimbeni & Desmond, 2011).

In terms of this study, findings from the initial focus groups proved valuable as a benchmark to compare how reading was affected by the introduction of wordless picturebooks in participants' homes. The themes identified in the data collected in the focus groups after the completion of the reading programme, will be provided in the next section.

6.3.2   Participants' reading context after exposure to the reading programme

Presented in this section are the findings related to the participants' reading context in the home after they were exposed to the reading programme. The findings are presented with reference to the design principle of designing, or "the process of shaping emergent meaning which involves re-presentation and recontextualisation" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008: 203). The researcher will focus on, amongst other aspects, how designing transformed knowledge and experiences by creating 'new constructions and representations of reality'. In particular, the researcher wanted to investigate how the attitudes of the parents and children toward reading activities changed as a result of the use of wordless picturebooks in their homes.

Based on thematic analysis of the data gathered after completion of the six-week reading programmes at Funanani's Shoshanguve and Mamelodi centres, and the four-week reading programme at the Melutsi Township, seven main themes were identified. The themes focus on transformation, recontextualisation, association with the story, using illustrations to create meaning, a learning curve, tangible value of learning, and responses to the participant-created books. The themes and relevant sub-themes will be discussed individually below. It should be noted that, as the participant retention at Mamelodi and Melutsi Townships was very low, many of the quotes in this section are from the responses of the participants in the Shoshanguve site.

6.3.2.1 Transformation

Stein (2008: 23) postulates meaning-making as a "process of transformative action", which produces change both in the object being transformed and in the individual who is the agent of the transformation. The theme of transformation was a recurring one in terms of the transformed relationship of the participants, either towards reading as an activity, or towards each other.

The transformations that occurred during the reading process will be discussed with reference to several sub-themes, as well as the opportunities or constrictions afforded the use of wordless picturebooks in participants' homes.

6.3.2.1.1 Transformation of the reading relationship between parent and child

Whereas the participants previously reported that they at times experienced reading with their three to six-year-old children frustrating, by the end of the reading programme their views had changed and their children were capable of understanding, reading and making meaning. This transformation was evident in the fact that; (a) participants perceived their children as being able to concentrate better when using the wordless picturebooks, and (b) participants and their children became equal readers during book sharing activities.

a)   *Transformation of participants' views of their children as readers*

The research findings indicate that the participants' perceptions of their children as young readers changed over time. A number of changes were evident; namely, the children's ability to concentrate on the reading, to understand what they were reading, to indicate objects in the pictures and increased joint reading activities.

A recurring theme in the data was that the participants perceived their children as being able to **concentrate** better when using the wordless picturebooks, as opposed to reading the Bible, magazines, school books or, in some cases, other picturebooks that contained text. Participant D12 noted the following: "They [used to] just go around … run, run, run. …They are too lazy. But now, with these books, maybe even for 30 minutes, they look at the books." Another clear example was the change observed by Participant S1, who was extremely frustrated with her son's concentration level at the start of the programme. His twin sister was able to engage better in reading, and his mother was worried about him. In week three of the programme – after their first two weeks of reading *Abongi's Journey* and A *Very Nice Day* – she said "[y]ou know, when it's coming to the two of them, I'm having a problem with the boy. He can concentrate, but just a little bit. I don't know, is he clumsy?" The researcher suggested she let him tell the story, instead of trying to "read" to him. In the last focus group interview, this participant reported that she observed a big change in his behaviour: "They [the wordless picturebooks] brought that attention. I mean, after eating they were like 'Mommy can we

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read *Max?'* I realised … less play, more reading." The participant also mentioned that replacing the character's name with that of her son's, resulted in him being more interested in the book and wanting to read "his" book. This aspect will be discussed in Theme 6.3.2.3 (Identifying with the story).

Participant S4 compared her experience of reading with her child before and after the introduction of wordless picturebooks. She mentioned:

> When I read, she says, no give me and she would be looking and the book and she would not understand and she would take a pen and draw and scratch … It was easier for me to use [the wordless picturebooks] with her [than other books that she had tried in the past]. If I read [the words] she doesn't concentrate, [then] she goes [leaves].

The findings resonate with a study by Cooper et al. (2013) on mother-infant book sharing, in which an increase in infant attention span during book sharing activities was reported. The participants' reports that children were able to focus for longer periods of time when using wordless picture books could be indicative of the assertion by Jalongo et al.(2002: 168) that many children can recognise and express themselves and are better able to interpret pictures before they are proficient in decoding print. Wordless picturebooks seemed to be able to capture children's attention by relying solely on pictures and inviting children to respond to pictures. Lewis (2001: 59) argues that children born in the twenty-first century possess better understanding of visual imagery, simply because their world is filled with images. Greenhoot et al. (2014: 1) offers insight into the value of visual images in children's literature, by stating the following:

> Why are illustrations so ubiquitous in story books for young children? It is widely believed that story illustrations help capture children's attention to stories and facilitate their understanding and retention of what is being read to them. This conclusion is bolstered by studies of preschool children's visual attention during storybook reading, which shows that they are overwhelmingly focused on the illustrations rather than the print (for example, Evans and Saint-Aubin, 2005; Justice et al., 2008).

Understanding the reading activity was another recurring theme in the responses of the majority of participants. Participants stated that with books that contain text that they had used for reading, the children would not really understand what the participant read and, consequently, there was little engagement by the children in the reading activity. With the wordless books, the participants were of the opinion that the children understood the book and story better and thus actively engaged in the "reading", making the activity more meaningful. This was evident in the comments of Participant S4, who reported that her child does not always understand the "reading words", but with the wordless picturebooks her child likes reading and she believes her child feels involved in the reading.

This participant's observations that pictures allow for "pretend reading", where the child is "reading" using only storybook pictures, can be related to the theory proposed by Sulzby (in Dowhower, 1997:

70). This theory indicates that pretend reading forms a noteworthy link in the process of becoming literate – as individuals develop narratives, they develop a sense of story and demonstrate an understanding of sequence, while practicing oral and written storytelling.

Another participant (S4) added that "[m]aybe, when it comes to words, when you read to her, she doesn't understand what you say, or maybe we are reading English and she doesn't know. Maybe that's why. But with the pictures, fantastic!" Participant S14 also experienced that the reading activity with the wordless picturebooks was "fun" because her son "did understand everything", compared to the Grade 1 books she had been using. Participant D20 compared her experience of reading with her three-year-old son using the wordless picturebooks to that of using her daughter's school books. She said:

> I have a daughter in grade one. He [her three-year-old son] doesn't understand it [her school books], but this one he understands. He is more [involved] with this one than with the grade one book. So he understands. He loves these pictures. Even when I go somewhere, he says we must "do this" [points at the last page of 'Abongi's Journey' to an illustration of the mother hugging the main character].

The participants' views that their children better understood the reading activities based on wordless picturebooks seemed to set their minds at ease as to their children's capability of engaging with books. The absence of text appeared to allow for more freedom, without parents feeling the need to guide their child in a "correct" reading of the pictures, as would be the case with a predetermined text. This finding relates to Serafini's (2014: 26) belief that the lack of words allows readers an opportunity to construct different interpretations of the same book and that this exploration of potential meaning, as opposed to predetermined meaning, is important in becoming visually literate. Jalongo et al. (2002: 168) believe that wordless picturebooks support learners who are not yet decoding print and can build their confidence as readers and writers. The participants' reactions indicate that the child's experience of "reading" can boost the child's confidence. One participant furthermore related the child's enhanced confidence to the modelling by the parent during parent-child reading, and reported the following:

> It's an impact to the kids and then sometimes the way that somebody thinks of it [the book] is not the way that we think of it – it is good for the child to know that he can create on his own. On the TV we have – that writer …. Willard – *Skeem Saam*. He is a scripture [preacher], then they can see I can be like Willard, and Willard is a big man, and she can compare herself with him and know that I can do the same thing he is doing (S8).

Achievement-related attributes are among the main reasons why some children display initiative when faced with obstacles to success, compared to others who give up easily (Berk, 2006: 452). These attributions emerge from around the end of a child's second year, when children start to look to adults

to evaluate their accomplishments (Stipek, Recchia & McClintic, 1992, in Berk, 2006). Children's willingness to persevere with a task is shaped by their early *experience of success* and consequently, the participants' positive reaction to their children's attempts to "read" pictures is noteworthy. Positive feedback from parents, for example that their child "understood everything" can foster mastery-oriented attributes in a child. Ruhland and Feld (1977: 1363) note that the support that children receive at home is of great importance for their development of achievement motivation.

Participants also expressed surprise at their children's ability to **identify objects**, and in some cases, correct their parent's version of the story or identification of objects. Participant S8 laughed when telling how her son had started arguing with her about the clothing of one of the characters. She explained that, while reading *A Very Nice Day*, "my son was fighting with me about this – my *three-year-old son*, he understands, and then he said to me, on the foot here, he said "it's a shoe." This type of identifying relates to Sulzby's (in Dowhower 1997: 70) first category of reading, where the reader attends to images without forming a story through pointing, labelling and commenting. The fact that the participant's child was able to debate what certain objects were indicates engagement in this first category of reading. This negotiation during the storytelling process can also give the children a chance to cultivate their oral language and to practice speaking to nonthreatening people; in this case their parent or siblings (Hennings, 2000. in Palmer et al. 2000: 93), which is indicative of appropriate scaffolding. In this regard, Jean Piaget, in his theory of cognitive development, proposes that children construct new knowledge through their own activity, aided by the involvement of parents. He indicates that children between the ages of two and four increasingly start to use mental representations to understand their worlds and identify images; for example, mental pictures of objects and people, as one of the most powerful mental representations (Berk, 2013: 226-227; Louw & Louw, 2014: 158).

The above findings point to the importance of age-appropriate reading materials, suggesting that the Grade 1 or 2 books that some of the parents had been using to read with their preschool children at home were too difficult for them to master. Participant D20 mentioned that: "I used to read [to her child] but he did not understand. With this book [*Kamagelo's Friends* – a participant-created wordless picturebook created at the Shoshanguve site], he understands." Participant D22 noted that she has read with her son at home, but that he struggled to understand the books. She mentioned that: "I read with him but the books [that they currently have at home] are too much for him [he does not understand]." This aspect is highlighted by Louw and Louw (2014: 177), who note that age-appropriate materials are important in joint reading activities. Berk (2006: 454) states that tasks that parents engage in with their children should be meaningful and, more importantly, suitably fitted to the child's *current* competencies so they do not become overwhelmed. The repetition of this aspect also

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indicates that the participants, not having been exposed to reading and books when they were growing up, might not know which books would be suitable to read with their preschool children, even when visiting a library to obtain books. It appears that some participants experienced, like their children, that they were also better able to understand and enjoy reading the wordless picturebooks, which contributed to reading being a joint activity.

Some of the participants mentioned that the use of the wordless picture books made **joint reading** with their children a more enjoyable activity. Furthermore, the joint reading had unexpected benefits in terms of their relationship with the young children. Participant S11 stated that: "[when] they [the children] participate, you are making time with your kids and you can see the difference. They look healthy because you have that bond with them." Participant S4 stated that she and her child could now *both* understand the book and that her daughter is also involved in the reading, which is important to her. This joint activity was very important to her. She said "[b]efore [the wordless picturebooks], I would read alone."

Joint reading has emotional benefits for parents, in addition to the literacy development benefits the activity offers children. Seden (2007: 134-135) notes that sharing a book with a child is a pleasurable experience – a sentiment echoed by the majority of participants in this study. Two participants noted instances where the closing page of *Abongi's Journey*, where the main character is hugging his mother, became a way for them to end their reading sessions. D20 reported, "[m]y son says 'Mommy, now I'm finished. This page is you, and me. Now we are speaking and he says 'Mommy, I love you! I love you mommy'." Participant D11 also reported that her son says "we must do this [hug]" while pointing to last page of *Abongi's Journey*.

Participant S11's mention of bonding and noticing how her child looked, is noteworthy when considering the findings of Wessels et al. (2016: 1) that parents who live in poor neighbourhoods are less inclined to show warmth towards their children. A warm, affective climate contributes to children's motivation to engage in joint reading (Landry et al., 2012: 971). Joint reading can also play an important role in transformation through fostering a perceived improvement in parenting capabilities (Lam et al., 2013: 133; Leung et al., 2010: 597; Seden, 2007: 137). In the South African context, where parenting is made increasingly challenging by adverse social and economic conditions and access to books in the home is very limited (Mulgrew, 2012), these advantages of parent-child reading in the home are encouraging.

b)   *Parent and child as equal readers and storytellers*

Both parent and child could be active participants in the reading process; a situation that Barbara Wall (in Falconer, 2009: 369) refers to as "Dual Address". During this process, both child and parent become

equal but distinct readers. The majority of parents reported that after showing their children how the wordless picturebooks worked, their children could also actively "read" the book and participate in the storytelling process.

Participants S1 and S2 noted that they did most of the storytelling for the first two weeks of the programme, but once their children understood "what was going on" the children took the lead. Participant S4 noticed that her child would initially "also say what I was saying", rather than forming her own story, but after two weeks observed that they both told the story "together". She had at this stage adopted a strategy of asking "What do you see?" and then they would start "reading" the book. She would continue to ask questions such as: "What are they doing, who is this?"In that way, they would create a story together and talk about the book. Similarly, Participants D13 and D25 mentioned that their children would ask questions about objects in the pictures, such as "What kind of car is this?" or "Who is in the car?" and in this way they would start forming a dialogue with their children until the children would tell their own story. Participant S14 explained that although her child only "tried" to create his own story at the beginning of the programme, she noted a change and towards the end of the programme "he never let me to tell him [a story], he was telling [the story]." She was clearly surprised that her child could tell his own story and asked if he could share the story with the researcher during the data collection interview. Her son proceeded tell the researcher about *Abongi's Journey*, excitedly naming the characters and animatedly pointing out different objects in the book.

It appeared that for some participants and their children, the transformation of reader roles as described above, evolved over a longer period of time. Towards the end of the programme Participant M2 reported that her child did not as yet tell a story by himself but just points, and Participant M1 described the reading as a "process". The increased participation of the children in actively "reading" the book and in the storytelling process can be regarded as a character trait that allows the wordless book to be considered as a crossover genre. This transformation of reader roles – from the parent reading to the child, to the parent and child reading and co-constructing knowledge *together* – is a noteworthy aspect of the study. This change appears to be supported by scaffolding provided by the participants (Lilly & Green, 2014).

As the reading programme continued, some participants tended to naturally scaffold early reading skills, gradually withdrawing from the reading and storytelling and allowing their child to take the lead. Participant S8 reflected on this aspect after four weeks of reading:

> We are giving the time for the child tell most of it. If you say something, they take it [understand it] easy, but it is good to listen to the child, to just keep quiet and just be busy with the book. You see the book, you open the book and you look at the book, you know what's going on. But you let the child tell you – so that he can understand. No, mine didn't tell from the beginning, she was a little bit shy, but now she understands them so she is telling me stories.

The nature of the talk discussed by parents in the aforementioned sections can be considered as what Janet Evans (2013: 104) refers to as collaborative talk; used as a means of assisting readers comprehend and, importantly, enjoy what they are reading. This co-creation of knowledge is often referred to as one of the main benefits of wordless picturebooks. By asking the child questions about the book, the parent is teaching the child strategies to understand text in a manner that is relevant to their culture or social group and in a manner that allows for the parent and child to co-construct an understanding of that text (De Bruin-Parecki, 1999: 22). Evans (2013) cites literature showing that studies have repeatedly indicated that talk in reaction to picturebook reading has an effect on how children learn through talk.

Whereas it is difficult to establish that actual skills development took place without appropriate measures, the majority of parents noted that the reading process became easier and that their children became more confident readers and storytellers. Towards the end of the programme, Participant M1 noted that "I don't tell them a story. They are the first to tell me their stories, then after, I tell them my own story." Participant M8 also reported a change in how her child engaged with the books: "With those ones [the school books her older child brought home] she would just listen, sit there, not cooperate, but with these ones [the wordless picturebooks] she will just jump in and say stuff with me." As their children became more confident in using the wordless picturebooks, participants reported that they could withdraw from being as active in the reading and allow their children to explore the book. Participants also reported that after the initial sessions, their children were able to use the books to read independently. Vygotsky's (1978: 86) notion of the zone of proximal development, indicating how a more competent person assists a less skilled one to reach higher levels of competency, might explain this progress. As indicated by Kravtsova (2009: 11), what children do today with the help of an adult, or a more capable peer, they will do tomorrow independently.

This transformation of children being read to, to being active participants in storytelling and reading with their parents has important implications for how we view a culture of reading and literacy development in the home. Reading with a child who responds to the activity in a manner that is involved and meaningful can empower parents in their role as the child's first educator. It can also and strengthen their confidence in assuming this role. A warm, affective reading environment, which is noted for motivating children to read, can be cultivated by joint reading in which both participants are equally engaged.

6.3.2.1.2 Transformation of participants' relationship to the reading activity

The second sub-theme in this section relates to the transformation of the relationship between the participants and the reading activity. Whereas reading had not been part of participants' routine prior to the introduction of the wordless picturebooks and the start of the programme, participants consistently reported that there was a notable change in the frequency of their reading activity at home.

In the least discernible case, reading in the home progressed from being non-existent to occurring once a week, whereas the biggest difference was found where reading increased from three times a week to as much as three times a day over a five-week period. Participant S14 reported that: "it [reading] is no longer new with these books because he wanted to read. Every time, he says 'Mama I want to read'." Another participant (S11) reported that they read "in the morning (before school), maybe the day, and then at night when we go to sleep we read again. Three times." Previously, the same participant had reported that they did not read often. Participant D16 noted that her son wanted to read more than he had previously done, saying: "He wants to continue. When he finished it [reading], he says 'Again!'." Participants also reported that their children asked for the books, with comments such as "We read the books every night" and "They [the children] ask me to bring them the books that the white lady [the researcher] gave me" providing insight into the formation of reading rituals.

The participants generally reported that the wordless picturebooks made a difference in their reading practices at home. This difference was linked to the fact that books were easy to use, that reading became a family activity and that the children initiated their own reading activities.

a)   Easy to use for parents

The participants reported that the wordless picturebooks were easy for parents to use at home. One participant (S4) noted that she could give the book to her daughter and her daughter would tell stories and she would listen while the participant could carry on with her household tasks such as cooking dinner. This participant was of the opinion that "she [her daughter] can educate herself with these books" which seemed to be one manner in which this family solved the issue of time as being a challenge to their reading at home.

The non-prescriptive nature of the wordless picturebooks was highlighted as an advantage by most participants, who reported that these books were easier to use than books they had previously read with their children. Participant S1, who would usually source Bible stories from the library for her children, explained:

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> To be honest, these ones are … they are very interesting. I realised that I spend a lot of time reading these books with them. More than the Bible ones. The Bible story I did not read them so much compared with this one.

Many of the children took to the storytelling aspect that wordless picturebooks offer naturally, having been exposed to books at the ECD/day care centre they attended. Participant S8 mentioned the following in this regard: "At the crèche they are doing the storytelling, but I think it's a short time. Then when you come home they ask you … they want to sit down and share with you." Furthermore, it seemed that the children enjoyed being the authors of their own stories and that the wordless picturebooks were as easy for them to use on their own to tell a story as it was to use them in shared reading with their parent or primary caregiver. Heath (1983, 2001, in Boakye, 2015: 135) points out that rich storytelling, imaginative analogy and metaphors play an important role in low SES South African communities. The wordless picturebooks seemed to facilitate storytelling among the participant's children, which could point to a modal preference for this group.

Storytelling has been identified as an essential component in a sample of successful family literacy programmes across the United States (Palmer et al., 2000: 93). The potential that wordless picture books could facilitate storytelling through visual prompts, as reported by the participants, could certainly be viewed as a positive aspect of the genre in a reading intervention. In addition, the above quote from Participant S8 resonates with what Palmer et al. (2000: 98) describe as storytelling's ability to create a bridge between community and school.

One participant found the wordless picturebooks easy to use, as they could relate more to the child's world. When compared to other reading material that she had used, Participant S10 found that the wordless picturebooks were "simpler [as] it explains mostly about children. Magazines, it's all about fame. It was [easier], because I realise it was more easy for him to analyze the stories." Her reference to magazines and fame was reminiscent Gottschall's (2012: 137-138) notion on the moral of story, in which "story functions as reinforcing a set of common values and strengthening the ties of common culture." In this sense, the "fame" that magazines deal with may simply be too alien for a child to engage with. Edwards and Ngwaru (2012: 125) warned that depending on material that has little relevance to a reader's everyday life, or in this case to the child's frame of reference, often results in children remaining uninterested in reading for enjoyment. In some of the participants' homes, the programme resulted in reading becoming a family activity.

b)   *Family activity*

In some cases, participants reported that reading became a family activity, where both participants and children participated in reading practices, with the older children in the family joining them for storytelling. Turns were taken telling stories and in some instances the participants that were able to write, they would write down the story that their children told and kept it as a "memory". Participant S8 noted that "[we are] reading more. Even the [other] kids are reading more." Participants S2 also reported that her older children would become involved in reading the wordless picturebooks, stating the following:

> I have two [other children], [aged] 11 and 9. They enjoyed these [wordless books, Abongi's Journey and A Very Nice Day], because I told them there is no words. So they can see everything here and write their own [story]. And then, like, everything it was easy.

These findings indicate that the family was also potentially transformed through the design principle. Wordless picturebooks created the capacity for creativity and invention in a family context, whereas this had previously not been present. Kalantzis and Cope (2008: 203) note that in the process of designing meaning (using the available designs from wordless picturebooks in this case), people alter their relationship with each other, and transform themselves through their co-engagement in designing. This has broad implications for the creation of literacy-rich family environments and the families' ability to transform their idea of reading in their home. Reading as a *family activity* was seen by participant M1 as an enjoyable activity. She stated "We [can] have a great chat with these books" which indicates a clear transformation of her family's relationship with the reading activity. M1's older children also chose to write down their own stories from the wordless books. Palmer et al. (2000: 98) emphasise that writing down stories reinforces the reading-writing link and motivates children to maintain the story time exchange. This information is encouraging in the genre's ability to foster a love for reading, rather than solely being associated with educational outcomes.

The information above indicates an enjoyment of the wordless picturebooks not only by the three to six-year-olds, but also by the other children in the family, highlighting the genre's versatility and their ability to appeal to readers of all ages (Beckett. 2012: 84, 99, in Arizpe , 2013: 167; Dowhower 1997: 61; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001: 9,21). It is noted that Arizpe, Colomer and Martínez-Roldán (2014: xvii) report that a risk involved in creating wordless picturebooks is that they "… can be too silent to even court attention. Additionally, illustrated books are sometimes regarded dismissively, even by older children who feel their reading has graduated to the level of 'pictureless' prose." However, the research findings indicate that these books could also be enjoyed by older children; implying that the genre's ability to address different audiences means that these books can be shared in a family that comprises readers at different stages of emergent reading or literacy development (Jalongo et al.,

2002: 168). These are encouraging findings for the genre as a serious literary source within the South African context.

Two of the participants (S1 and M1) reported reading the books on their own when their children were at the ECD centre. This is a positive finding in terms of the 'resemiotisation' and 'rematerialisation' of books among adult participants (Iedema, in Stein 2008: 23), so that books and the reading activity can be reframed as part of their social reality. Participant S1 reported:

> Even myself, I was addicted to these books. I will wake up and do all my stuff, and then instead of watching TV, I take the book. And I can make my own story by myself. But different … just by myself. I take the book and tell myself an interesting story.

Participant M1 in particular enjoyed the illustrations in Piet Grobler's *The Rainbow Birds*. She stated that her children needed some help understanding the book and were unsure of the characters but could name the colours. She however enjoyed the book very much, saying:

> Look, how beautiful it is. Just look at how beautiful this place is. They are enjoying themselves. It's very pretty. It seems like when these birds pass here, the colours, they leave the colours behind. They make the place look beautiful, they are painting the city with rainbow colours. This book is all about colours, how much kids like colours.

Participant M1 attributed the development of reading as a family ritual to the increased frequency in reading within her home. After the children were given time to play, they come together as a family and read. She described their process as follows:

> Each and every one chooses a [wordless] book – the one that he wants us to read. So they know, they choose one and then we start with you [indicating that she would choose one of her children to start the reading session] … I have a book that I write everything in, I'll bring it [to show it to the researcher] next time.

This type or ritual was also observed in Participant S10's report that her child insisted on singing the "Nal'ibali song" before each reading session. This song was used as an icebreaker during the story collection workshop. This ritual of song before reading was something that both the participant and her child enjoyed, and she believed that the "Nal'iBali method" of reading with her child had a positive influence on their reading at home. This participant explained: "Before we even read, he has to sing that song, the Nal'iBali song. And this is how we jiggle!" The researcher is of the opinion that these findings link story rituals in Crawford and Hade's (2000: 66) explanation of 'sense-making through story language and story rituals' where they report that "familiarity of these rituals and language registers can provide a scaffolding effect as children make sense of texts." Reports such as these indicate that reading can become an activity that is engaged in often in low SES households, if participants have access to appropriate reading material.

The importance of the Nal'iBali workshop in making reading activities something that is accessible to all cultures needs to be highlighted at this stage. Participants could participate in this workshop in their own language, with facilitators who could engage with them in a read-aloud using their mother tongue. This type of modelling of books, reading activities and how to engage with reading material may have made reading less "alien" and participants could relate to the facilitators who were doing the reading, as opposed to a verbal instruction on reading. Another aspect that can be considered in relation to this, is the societal preference of modes. Kress (2010: 149-150) notes that some cultures and societies prefer some modes over others, with Western societies having favoured writing over image in most areas of formal communication. Storytelling in the South African context may, when considering the rich history of storytelling in the country, be a preferred mode of communication among some cultures. This was also demonstrated in Heath's study (Boakye, 2015: 135), where rich storytelling, imaginative analogy, and metaphors were important in a black working class community of low SES families. The value of Nal'iBali in connecting with African storytelling was also clear in their use of rhythm, gesture as well as repetition of language (Tuwe, 2016), especially with regard to the ice breaker song, which participants particularly enjoyed. The researcher proposes that their facilitation of the workshop harnessed African storytelling's distinct capacity to "provide entertainment" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986; Utley, 2008, in Tuwe, 2016: 3) and connected reading which, as seen in the initial interviews, was strongly linked to educational outcomes with one of the oldest African traditions. Some of the adult participants may have grown up with this type of storytelling activity during their childhood years in their grandparent's households.

The workshop emphasised the multimodality of reading as the body became a resource in the study through dancing and singing. Multimodality is intrinsically tied to the body, in that bodies produce multimodality "through the manner in which they are constituted sensually and how these senses act on the world and are acted on" (Stein, 2008: 26). The senses guarantee our experience of our semiotic world, and reading in this case, as multimodal because they do not function in isolation.

There was no story collection workshop at the Melutsi Township site and parents did not have exposure to the Nal'iBali read-aloud session that participants had at the other sites. This may be one of the reasons for the poor participant retention rate. As discussed earlier, linking the book with song, dance and storytelling proved to be an important aspect at the previous two sites, and may have motivated participants at this site to continue with the programme.

c)   *Children initiated their reading (individually and with the parent)*

Parents consistently reported that their children would take the lead when it came to reading. After either the initial, or the first few instances in which the parent had initiated the start of the reading

activity, the child would ask, unprompted, to read – either with the parent or by themselves. Participant S4 said: "[s]he [her daughter] would even say, 'Mommy can you please give me the book, I want to read the book'. And I would give it to her". Participant S8 reported that "she [her daughter] calls me. I don't like to call them. The [child] won't enjoy it and he won't concentrate on it [if the mother calls him]". The same participant also reported that she did not enjoy reading herself, but is reading more now because her children ask her to read. Participant S14 said "my child is the one that likes the books and he fetches those two [books] and starts reading alone, and then I join him and start reading". Participant S6 reported that during the first two weeks of the programme, she had only read the wordless picturebooks once with her son, but he wanted to read them more. He asked her to read and brought books to her. During the interview, her son also picked up the book and carried on reading and talking about the pictures throughout the interview. It would appear that, regardless of parents' attitude to reading, once the children had interacted with the book a few times, they would "read" by themselves.

These findings link very strongly with social learning theory and Albert Bandura's (1977) suggestion that children observe models in their surroundings and encode their behaviour, which they may also imitate at a later time (McLeod, 2011). Though the extent of children's understanding of the books during individual reading cannot be established, the fact that they were modelling a behaviour that they had previously done with their parent/primary caregiver is encouraging. Their willingness to engage in reading on their own also indicates a sense of mastery and self -determination and points to a possible intrinsic motivation for reading (Fawson & Moore, 1999: 326) when they have access to books in their own homes. Access to these books then is a strong motivation for reading, as was witnessed in the short time it took for children to start adopting reading behaviour by themselves.

It can be argued that children had transformed their own relationship with the reading activity, through attaching a meaning of independence and enjoyment with the object.

6.3.2.2 Recontextualisation
The participants' use of wordless picturebooks can be considered as the process of "designing" meaning, which Kalantzis and Cope (2008: 203) describe as "the process of shaping emergent meaning which involves re-presentation and recontextualisation". The recontextualisation of a text implies that a change of meaning has taken place, as meaning is dependent on context. Designing makes use of available resources in a manner which constructs new interpretations of them. These new interpretations and realities are subsequently referred to as The Redesigned (New London Group, 2000: 23)

Throughout the research, participant feedback indicated that they had reproduced and transformed the available resources in two primary manners; first; through the multilingual use of wordless picturebooks, and second, The Redesigned was demonstrated in the multiple stories that participants were able to source from the same book.

6.3.2.2.1 Multilingual use of wordless picturebooks

Although not the most prominent theme that surfaced during the data analysis, the multilingual use of wordless picture books is arguably one of the most important factors to emerge from the research. All participants reported using the wordless picturebooks in more than one language, one of which was their mother tongue. Parents brought available resources to the redesigning aspect of the picture book, in the form of their home languages, or in other words, other linguistic varieties they are familiar with.

Alongside Shona, Pedi, Zulu, Northern Sotho, Tsonga, Sesotho and Afrikaans, English was also used consistently throughout the book reading. D13 said she initially read the books in their home language, but that "[s]ometimes it is good to use English too". S8 reported that

> [we told the story in] our own [language] – Tswana. But, some words, you can't tell them [the children] in that, you use the English one. When you speak you don't speak frequent Tswana, you put English because sometimes it is like a 'window', and in Tswana it is a long thing, and then the child can't understand it so you just switch to the English one.

The above quote indicates that 'code-switching', or alternating between two or more languages, occurred during the reading, which is a common occurrence for any multilingual individual. The books allowed for storytelling to take place in a language of the participants' choice, with both adult and child being able to create stories using the pictures. "Resemiotisation" of the book also occurs in that the book is not only translated from pictures into words, but also into different languages. This is indicative literacy as a social practice, as outlined by Rogers et al. (1999).

S11 reported using the wordless picturebooks predominantly in her home language, but added that she felt it was important to translate into English, "because at the day care they tell them in English, and they tell us at home we must do this. Then if you do your language then they struggle at school – but at least we can bring a little bit of home language in". S1 agreed, stating that she starts reading "in my home language and then after I translate in English so that they can all understand". M1 said she translated the stories from Sotho into English so that her younger children can become more proficient in it, also stating that English is emphasised in their school.

The above quotes demonstrate how parents/primary caregivers brought their personal linguistic resources to the reading process, but that ideologies about language were also present. Busch (2011:

544 in Bristowe, Oostendorp & Anthonissen, 2014: 230) propose that languages (and varieties of languages) form groups of communicative methods which are formed by distinctive practices and ideologies. They further note that speakers that participate in spaces of communication position themselves in a relation to the rules that apply in that specific space. "In each instance, they bring with them experiences and evaluations from other spaces which they inscribe into the practices involved" (Busch, 2012: 18). In other words, the circumstances in which language is used dictate the individual's linguistic identity (Bristowe, Oostendorp & Anthonissen, 2014: 230). Previous reading experiences of adult participants may have been in English, as they had limited or no access to books in African languages. As a result, they may have brought this previous experience to their current reading practice, which further accounts for their need translate stories into English. It was also noted in the literature, that many South African parents choose for their children to be taught in English. Their home language may not be viewed as important for learning and is consequently devalued. Buthelezi (in Cook, 2013) suggests there is a shift needed for a more positive attitudes towards mother tongue education among parents, rather than believing that English will give children a "higher status".

In Chapter 4, the researcher discussed the importance of mother tongue or home language instruction in terms of providing children with easy access to concepts and facilitating cognitive development, as well as learning in a language in which children are fluent and can relate to their homes and communities (Louw & Louw, 2014: 246). Reading skills learned in the mother tongue can be transferred to learning a second language (Krashen, 2004, in Grundvig, 2012: 14), which is especially important in the South African context, where the medium of instruction in schools is often not the same as the language spoken in the child's home. In terms of school readiness, the participant's ability to use the books in mother tongue and then translate into English can have benefits in assisting to prepare children for school – where they will be taught in English from Grade 4 – while still allowing them to experience reading and learning in their home language. The books do not prescribe a specific language and consequently, regardless in which language the story is told in, the child and parent can, as Brown (2016) notes, "get the pleasure of the story but are not defeated by the language". These books can thus serve as an appropriate means of scaffolding for second language acquisition, where children can master print literacy in their own language first, and then be exposed to English through stories, and oral language, before being confronted with printed text, which they probably would not yet have mastered in their mother tongue.

The books also seemed to ease parents' concerns about the school's expectation, as noted by participant M1, who said that English was emphasised in their school. A discussion with Claasens (2016) of The Funanani Trust, also shed some light in terms of participants' use of English. At the Shoshanguve centre, ECD classes are taught in mother tongue. Yet, they centre received numerous

requests from parents to incorporate English into the classes, as they feel their children will be at a disadvantage learning only in mother tongue. The classes at the Mamelodi centre are given in English, which has subsequently increased the demand in that area. The importance of mother tongue education seems to be misunderstood among participants, as English is viewed as a means for their children to "get ahead". In the Melutsi Township group too, parents' emphasis on the need for their children to learn English echoes with the participants from the previous sites, as the day care centre uses indigenous African languages to interact with the children. Maile (in McKay, 2015: 98) noted that many South Africans pin their hopes for a better life on education and, when viewed in this light, the parents' concern for their children to learn English is easily understood, especially with regard to their own context in low resourced areas.

The role of language of instruction was again identified at this research site, with D26 expressing deep concern that his daughter, who was attending an Afrikaans medium school the following year, would not be able to cope because the day care centre did not engage with the children in Afrikaans. The concern with education and language as a means for his child to ensure success was apparent here. D26's requested "Afrikaans books" and insisted that he needed books with print, but that he did not own or have access to any books with Afrikaans writing. He said that he had been using the wordless picture books in Afrikaans with her at home, but he wanted a book with Afrikaans text to that she could "read words"[70].

When viewing language from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) perspective, the wordless nature of the genre allowed for participants to read in a language of their choice, rather than being "forced" to adopt a language. This has important implications for culture, where Ngũgĩ (1986: 3) argues that language is a means through which people perceive themselves and their place in the world. To Ngũgĩ (1986: 3) the use of English "was a means to obliterate people's belief in their languages, culture, their abilities and finally in themselves". Engaging in reading activities that promote the use of mother tongue in a non-prescriptive manner can instil a sense of pride and confidence in one's own language and culture. The use of wordless picture books, as a means to "decolonise the mind" at an early stage, is also an aspect of the genre that can be considered as empowering, especially for adult participants because the emphasis on learning in mother tongue would not have been emphasised as strongly when they attended school. Mother tongue needs to be enforced as an important language of learning and experiencing the world, and should also be used as a means to break the notion of books as a purely western and educational object.

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[70] Two Afrikaans children's books were sourced for this participant and brought to him in the following week. All other participants were invited to keep the books that they had used for the reading programme (with the exception of the community authored books, which as far as possible were collected by the researcher).

Newfield (2008: 2) notes that literacy education must provide access to languages of power, but should also take into consideration diversity, subcultures and dialectal differences that are presented in contemporary education contexts. The findings presented here may indicate that wordless picturebooks are a means in which an epistemology of pluralism can be developed to provides people with access to reading material without the necessity for them to ignore their own language preference or unique means of communication. Brown (2016) further notes that "in a country like ours, where we have such a number of languages to deal with, and perhaps illiterate or semi literate caregivers or parents, I think wordless picture books can be very powerful".

There were no reports of any trouble being encountered in translating books from one language to another, or of any of the illustrations being offensive or contradictory to their own cultural beliefs. This gives promising insight into the potential of wordless picturebooks to be used across different languages, although due to the small sample, it cannot definitively be said that this is the case. However, it should be noted that due to the lack of resources that these participants have, they may have been hesitant to express a dislike of any of the books for fear of having them taken away or not receiving more books. This could be a hierarchy issue, with participants not wanting to offend the researcher.

6.3.2.2.2   Different stories from the same book

The wordless picturebooks were read more than once at home – both children and parents used the same book a number of times to tell stories. Also, parents reported that they could source multiple stories from each book. One of the Melutsi Township participants [unclear who it was on the recording] said: "It was nice to read at home. For him, he can make any story, he makes one story and then he tells another story".

The children also enjoyed reading the same book a number of times. With every distribution of new reading books, the children would still ask their parents to reread books from the previous weeks, as reflected in participant S8's statement that "because it was three different section for the books, and when you take the new ones [books], they still want the old ones, because they want the old ones and enjoy it." Participant M1 also reported that she and her family would read the same book a number of times, stating that her children would ask her "Mom where's the book, where's the book?". She said that once they had started reading the wordless picturebooks that "every day when they come [home], they want the book". Participant S11 also added that her children "love[ed] the other ones and then they don't concentrate on the new ones".

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) argue that pictorial representation is more "open-ended", while with linguistic representation, meaning is more fixed. Pictorial representation could thus allow for the

ability to make up different stories from the same text. Reading in the case of wordless picturebooks is expanded to include the deciphering of signs, symbols and pictures, all of which vary from one social context to the next (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, in UNESCO, 2006: 151). The meaning of visual images comes from the arrangement of different visual elements. This includes the arrangement of elements in the image, which elements are foregrounded or emphasised and the manner in which the picture is made; for example, painting or collage. As a multimodal ensemble, all the elements in the picture – including the perceptual activity of the reader in viewing the image and verbalising what they see – interact in the meaning-making process. The relationships between the different modes all contribute to this process. However, these relationships are not fixed from person to person, or context to context. Even different reading events with the same individual person can be viewed as a different context. The non-prescriptive nature of wordless picturebooks allows readers construct assorted interpretations of the same book, and allows for them to reread it to reconsider initial impressions (Serafini, 2014: 26). This can contribute to the fact that children enjoyed reading the same book a number of times, experimenting with the relationships between elements in the books to create new stories at each reading occasion. Participant S8's opinion links strongly with this. She said that:

> if you got words, sometimes I think that it gives you just to read, it's something that has been done for you. And if it doesn't have, it's something that you can add. Like this [referring to A Very Nice Day], you can add this is sugar, but someone else might add that this is porridge, you can put whatever you can put. Because, as I understand, whatever they say there is no wrong.

She added that her children were "coming up with different meanings for the book. On one book you can hear the other one saying that and the other one saying that, and then you can understand that this one likes what, and that one likes that". The researcher is of the opinion that this is a very empowering aspect of wordless picture books, in that they allow a reader to gain a sense of mastery in telling their own stories. As Adichie (2009) notes, "stories can also be used to empower and to humanise" and that stories can convey dignity. The fact that different children in the same family were all able to tell their own stories is also important, they did not feel the need to simply retell the story as their mother or sibling had told it, but could add their own unique take to it. The development of narrative thinking allows for individuals to express what they understand about themselves and about other people (Engel, 2016).

Participants' creations of different stories also provides evidence of Designing, referred to as "something through which meaning-makers remake themselves (New London Group, 2000: 23). Stories are remade each time they are read by the individual reading them. By using multimodal social semiotics as theoretical framework, a number of themes can be understood better. For example, as discussed in Theme 5, participants used their own context and realities to give meaning to the

illustrations. In other words, the participants were not only interpreting the illustrations but were also creating and designing meaning.

In cases where parents said that the story remained relatively consistent, parents described how their children would become focused on detail in the pictures. Participant S4 noted that with *A Very Nice Day*, the story remained the same, but,

> she [her child] would even catch some of the stuff like then the girl was giving sweets to the animals and when the girl is reading, she would capture that. She would say "I want to see where the girl is giving sweets to the animals and I want to see where the girl is reading, does she read a story?! Give me that book I want to read a story too now! So it was fantastic. Because its pictures.

Although the child's narrative skills are not at an advanced level here, they are linking images and events at this stage. Interestingly, the child's reference to "also" wanting to read a story, based on her interpretation of the picture book indicates that modelling behaviour can be found in the content of books also, and that if children can associate with the character, that books could have an impact on their behaviour.

Participants, especially the children, were able to relate to the characters, and developed an attachment to specific characters such as Max or Abongi. The characters became part of their lives and when asking to read, they would refer directly to the characters. This may be due to the fact that they could relate easily to the character's activities and surroundings, such as playing with a wire car (*Abongi's Journey*) or watching television (*Max*). It was easy for the children to then elaborate and create different stories about things that they were familiar with. Adiche's (2009) reflection on her experience with books that included "people like me" comes to mind here, where children realise that people in the same context as them, such as Abongi – with whom many of the children identified – also exist in literature and books.

It could be argued that the fact that multiple stories can be sourced from one book, over a period of time, it adds to the economic viability of wordless picturebooks as a family reading intervention, although further research would be needed to establish if children react to picturebooks with words differently. It was noted earlier that participant S1, who did source books for her children to read at home, noted that her children read these books more often than other books she had in her home. After the first two weeks of reading, Participant S1 compared the wordless books with other books that she had read to her children, stating:

> Firstly, I would like to say, the wordless picture books are very much interesting. And then, uhm, the pages, are very bright and colourful, and then, they are very well illustrated. And, the other thing is that …. The kids … these children [indicating to her twins], the love to look into the books time and again and again.

A mother at the Mamelodi centre echoed this notion in referring to her older children's use of the wordless picturebook (further discussed in the next subtheme): "[t]hey [the older children] don't even read them [the books they bring from school] anymore! Yes, they do their homework and then after, we have to do this (points to wordless books) … (laughs). They love these books very much".

6.3.2.3 Identifying with the story

The majority of the parents reported that they had in some way applied the narrative of the story to their own lives. Often parents would refer to the main character by their own child's name, and children tended to do the same, sometimes referring to the books as "my story". These types of reaction can be linked to pretend or dramatic play (Engel, 2016), in which children actively experiment with different social and emotional roles of life. By applying the role of the character to themselves, they have the experience of "walking in someone else's shoes", or learning empathy. The books in this sense can serve as what Reynolds (2009: 108) refers to as "an intellectual platform from which to build new thinking …". This type of pretend play can also serve as a means of scaffolding for children to learn by *imagining* themselves as doing something. Gottschall's (2012) statement that "The human mind was shaped for story so that it could be shaped by story" comes to light here. Neuroscience has proved that as a reader engages in a book, bodily representations of emotions experienced by the protagonist are activated, so that the reader perceives that they are literally "feeling" what the protagonist is experiencing or going through. Children's experimentation with the different roles in stories can also provide them with a means to negotiate the life worlds they are part of and confronted with in daily life (New London Group, 2000: 16-17) without prescribing *how* they should negotiate these.

Participant S1 used her child's name as a means to get her son, who she struggled to get to read, to focus. She said,

> Because of this one [her son], I had to come with a plan, that's why I use their names. If I say [her child's name] he will listen and pay more attention. I used their names. He's not paying attention when it was Abongi. So I used their names, and when I am using his name he is paying more attention. So she [her daughter] used to say "[her son's name], let's read your book, let's start with your book first", and then I told them only later this is Abongi.

Other parents also used this strategy. For example, Participant S4 commented: "I said to her, this is [her child's name], what do you see, what does she do?", while D22 noted that her son wanted to use his own name, saying: "This is not Abongi, it's me".

As previously noted, children could identify with the characters or heroes of the story. Consequently, the narrative was not something that could only happen to someone else, but could also happen to them. This was also noted in Land & Buthelezi's (2004: 440) study, in which low-literate readers read

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a comic in which they were able to relate to the characters through their surroundings, actions and language use. Meaningful engagement with the contents of comics, or in this case a wordless picturebook, can consequently succeed in "instilling an enjoyment of reading in its low-literate readers". Hodge and Kress (1988: 23) view on a practical semiotics recognises people's relationships to "reality" in meaning-making, while Sipe's (2000: 74) work further suggests that personal connections; namely, making connections between the text and one's personal life is one of five aspects of literary understanding that children use, as manifested by their talk during storybook read-alouds. Another way they do so through the Transparent, in which there is evidence of the reader "surrendering to the power of the text, and having what Rosenblatt calls a "lived-through experience," so that, for the moment, the children's lives and the world of the story are, as it were, transparent to each other (Sipe, 2000: 74). The implications of this in terms of Commey's (2014: 25) concerns regarding African-centred education can be significant. The availability of characters that a child can identify with, not only in terms of race, but also in terms of surroundings and language, can allow a child to imagine what Sardar (2008: xv) refers to as a "black self". The Context of the Research cited Commey's (2014: 25) worrying comments that South African prescribed reading books included Xhosa and Zulu translations of *Little Red Riding Hood*. However, visually, there is no correlation with reality for many of its readers. Participant reactions to the characters and their ability to engage with the worlds of the characters or apply the story to their own lives, stresses the importance of content of wordless picturebooks used in interventions.

The fact that parents used their own initiative to encourage their children to read can further be viewed as an empowering aspect of the research. Parents were able to apply solutions that were tailored for, and worked with their own children. The parents' ability to connect elements of the wordless picturebooks to things that were relevant in their own or in their child's lives. This helped create a personal experience for them both during the reading session. Machado (2010: 608) argues that a parent's unique insight into the character of their child gives them an advantage of creating a pleasant reading experience, compared to reading experiences that the child may encounter in a school environment. Palmer et al. (2000: 98) also note that "[s]torytelling allows children to draw on resources from their homes and communities, including family and extended family members".

Kress (2010: 149–150) notes that "humans engage with the world through these socially made and culturally specific resources and they do so in ways that arise out of their interests". The data indicated that interest in books often had a strong influence on whether a child wanted to read a particular story or not – for example, when the characters were not the same gender as the reader. One parent laughed when she reported that her son had refused to read A Very Nice Day, stating "I am not a girl!". S6 report that her son did not like reading *The Princess and the Frog*, "He doesn't like this one because

it is a princess, and he is a boy, He says I don't like dresses so I don't want to talk about this!". This was not always the case, as S14's son, reading *A Very Nice Day* "was telling [the story] as if it is him. As if they wrote about him".

Participant S1 summed up her and her children's experience of *A Very Nice Day* and *All in a Day* (a participant-authored book):

> *All in a Day* – it's like *A Very Nice Day*. You can see where they are going. We are going to the college. It teach[es] you about life and reality. What is happening around you. It was like I took All In A Day and I compared it with *A Very Nice Day*– and they are actually same but not in that similar way – the way I see it they are the same, they are speaking about the same thing but *A Very Nice Day* is like you are having this very nice day, everything is on you. You are enjoying yourself. *All in a Day* is the same, it's all about yourself, *you* are going to school, *you* are going to enjoy yourself, meet new people, all those things.

S1's accounts of her use of her children's names during book reading reminds one that meaning-making is deeply rooted in social reality, and that the books she could relate to were books that she could identify as being located in "reality".

When reading *A Very Nice Day*, Participant S11 related the image of the little girl reading before she goes to bed to her family's bible reading practice. She said her daughter told her "it can be a bible before she [the character in the book] sleep". Although she did not create a narrative from the books at this stage, she was able to connect aspects of the pictures to her own life and family routine. Similarly, Bosch and Duran's (2009, in Arizpe, 2001: 169) study indicated that readers of different literacy levels enjoyed wordless picturebooks in different ways, with less literate readers not necessarily following the story, but enjoying the cultural and historical references.

Participant S8 related *Abongi's Journey* to aspirations for her daughter, stating that{

> …it gives u sometimes that in the future you will be having your own car. Then I used to tell her that she mustn't take the car because the car is for the boys, but then she used to tell me that girls are driving cars and that we should share everything!

This type of dialogue about social structures specifically linked to gender is noteworthy in terms of challenging stereotypes. Ellis and Adams (2009, in The Department of Social Development, 2013) pointed out that women are magnified in female headed households, where "dependency and vulnerability combined with sexist societal attitudes" result in these households often being very susceptible to poverty, challenging the roles females can create for new stories to challenge preconceived notions (Balcomb, 2000 in Wielenga, 2012) of women in poor communities. If children grow up with stories of empowerment, they could be influenced to think of themselves as empowered, rather than victims of their circumstances.

Social constructivist learning theorists also propose that prior knowledge and experience will have an effect on the learning process. When confronted with a new problem to solve , "perceptual or conceptual similarities between existing knowledge and a new problem can remind people of what they already know". Information that is not related to a learner's prior experiences is generally forgotten in a shorter period of time, whereas meaningful learning takes place when a learner can actively construct new information into their existing mental framework (Jennings et al., 2013). Participants' tendency to apply the events in a story to their own lives falls into this line of reasoning. Edwards and Ngwaru's (2012: 125) views are also relevant when considering the type of reading materials that children are exposed to, reminding us that relevant material can motivate children to read for enjoyment.

6.3.2.4 *Using Illustrations to create meaning*

The theoretical frameworks were most evident in the parents' explanations of how they and their children used the pictures to create meaning to form a narrative. Participants described how the illustrations were starting points for meaning-making, but that they would often engage in a verbal dialogue with their child in co-constructing a story or when agreeing on the meaning of objects in the illustrations. It was evident that the illustrations in the books had been used in the redesigning process to create new stories. These meanings were constructed in the participants' own social settings, and their interpretation, or meaning-making or social semiosis, was as Kress (2011: 242) describes, both a "*choice* of existing signifier-resources and the *making* of signs, newly, from them".

The multimodal nature of wordless picturebooks was clearly demonstrated by participant descriptions of how they would use them at home. All participants reported using the pictures and dialogue to create a story, with others including writing and drawing in their reading activity at home. M1 included listening as part of the way in which they made meaning, explaining that "[m]y three year old is pointing the colours. She is just pointing, but she listens to the older ones tell stories and then she asks me, mom, what is this one saying, and then I explain to her what is happening". The reference to pointing (gesture), speech and listening indicate that wordless picturebooks were used by participants in a manner that crossed sensory channels, and one mode – namely, image – can create medial variants of one mode (Stöckl, 2004: 11-12). The books further allowed for participants, as "sign makers" (Kress & Bezemer, 2008: 171) to use the "modal ensemble" (the picture book) to meet their interest and needs. Studies by Siegel (2006: 66) and Harste et al. (1984: 37) emphasise sign-making in all modes, rather than privileging only one mode, such as written language. Both of their studies highlighted that fact that when children wrote, they used talking, gesturing, drama and drawing as part of their meaning making process, which was viewed as an "intimate and integral" part of the meaning-making process.

The use of different means of meaning-making, such as drawing a picture about the story or writing down the story, allows for different representations of experience and expression. Benveniste (in Genosko, 1994: 62) notes that different media are not synonymous as semiotic systems and thus they cannot say the same thing, because of the different constraints and affordances of the medium involved. Participants were able to bring different material expressions and experiences of the wordless picturebooks in a multisensory engagement with them. The materiality of modes (Stein, 2008: 26) was also demonstrated in children's multimodal experience of the books. Sight was used to read the books, and speech used to speak about the books. Lastly, motor skills used to turn the pages included touch as a means to experience the books.

Hodge and Kress (1988: 40), in their observations about the function of context, noted that "[w]here all participants are not directly involved in a semiotic exchange, producers (of meaning) are likely to include instructions specifying producers, receivers and contexts into the form of their text". In this case, the lack of text to "narrate" the story, as well as the fact that the author and illustrator are not present to explain their intentions in the reader's home environment, leave the instructional role purely to the illustrations (and paratext). It should be noted that all readers recognised that there was a problem to solve (Nodelman, 1988) in terms of creating a story from the illustrations. From this perspective, the illustrations met the functional needs of the reader in prompting their verbal or written response to the pictures.

Stein (2008: 22) refers to 'interested design' – which starts with the sign-makers – in this case the illustrator's, interests and intentions – and their choices in shaping available resources in relation to a specific audience and context. How the readers made sense of the illustrations were at times in line with what the peritext, such as the title or blurb, suggested, and differed in other instances. Different understandings of signs, characters and motivations in the book also signify that the illustrations are socially produced and read and not "static, pre-given or predetermined" (Stein, 2008: 21). Here, children and parents/primary caregivers could bridge the gap between different areas of their lives, applying their different experiences to the interpretation of the books. For example, in *Abongi's Journey*, the white bird illustrated on each page varied from being a central character and "guardian of Abongi" (S1 and her children named him Moosa), to not featuring in the storytelling at all. For some of the participants, *Abongi's Journey* was only about transport – how Abongi chose to get from one page to another – whereas other participants explained it as a search for his mother, who he embraces at the end of the story.

It was interesting to note that the peritext, in the form of the title, did play a role in how some of the participants interpreted the books. *Abongi's Journey* was most often referred to as a "journey" from one place to another, and *A Very Nice Day* was often reported to be about how a child spent her "nice"

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day. However, as mentioned above, some participants varied on these themes and focused on other aspects of the book, rather than only reporting what the title had indicated. *One Starry Night* was reported by some participants as being confusing, with one (S8) stating that "I didn't finish because I didn't understand, now here, where does it come [from]?". The title had not helped make sense of the dream world that the book depicts, and S8 in particular could not understand why there would be a lion on the child's bedroom. Peritext then proved useful in describing the basic premise of the book, but not when the illustrations were unclear to readers, or readers could not identify with the social context (in this case a book about dreaming). The emphasis on dreaming varies considerably between cultures. Werner Nell (2014: 136) notes that there has been sociological attention given to the study of dreams. However, in his study of 20 South African participants, there was a clear distinction in the manner in which white participants ascribed meaninglessness to their dreams, as opposed to African participants, who all considered their dreams as having a high or moderate level of importance. A large number of participants also indicated that their cultural and religious beliefs and practices influenced their opinions about dreams (Nell, 2014: 127, 133). In the majority of African dream-related discourses (Nell, 2012 cites Bührmann, 1978: 106; Schweitzer 1996: 75), there exists the belief that ancestors are able to visit living relatives through dreams. Consequently, the representation of dreaming in a wordless picturebook may have different implications for different cultural groups.

It could be argued that by using a different modality (Hodge & Kress 1988: 122-123) for illustrations of the child sleeping or the child going into the dream world, the participant may have been better able to navigate the story. It should be noted that other participants who read the book did not experience the same problem and were able to create a story using the pictures, however; the stories did not necessarily relate to dreaming or a dream world. One of the community-created books, *Amu and the Sun,* also confused one participant and her child. In this book, the sun has been illustrated as being a character. When comparing this book to *Abongi's Journey*, which features a sun, but not as a character in the book, the parent reported "[t]he thing is, when you say it's a sun, he is wondering about the eyes and a mouth and the what and the what, but when you see this on [*Abongi's Journey*] he can easily say it is a sun". M1 reported similar confusion in The Rainbow Birds "My kids didn't understand if this is an old man or a child, because he is carrying a toy". S8 was the only participant who reported that that a book was so confusing that she did not finish it, and her experience was also only limited to one book. In the rest of the cases, the parent/primary caregiver and the child used talk to come to an understanding that they could both agree on. Although none of the books included symbols that participants found offensive, the fact that South African culture makes use of symbolism should be noted here, as it forms an important consideration for authors and illustrators. Owls for

example, are generally viewed in modern western culture as "wise" birds, whereas in the Zulu culture, owls are known as the witchdoctors' birds (Fordred, n.d.).

When considering that social semiotics is concerned primarily with the creation of meaning – and that meaning is embedded in the social and in the actuality of the people who make meaning (Anderson et al., 2015: 216) – context begins to play an important role in how meaning is made and what type of book is appropriate for parent-child reading in the home. The role that life experience played in reading was clearly seen in participant readings of *The Swimming Pool*, which was the only book that a participant pair reported they did not enjoy (the book was only given to a one of participant pair, due to the fact that other books had run out and were out of stock). The book is about a (white) family spending the day by their pool. Participants reported that they "did not enjoy" the book, and only paged through it once. Swimming pools are not native to the Shoshanguve or Mamelodi areas; consequently, many of the participants would not have spent much time by a pool and were unable to relate the illustrations to their own world view. A book which was intended to illustrate the enjoyment of family time together by the pool was completely lost to the readers in this study, who quickly went back to reading books like *Abongi's Journey*, which contained reference to activities and environments form their actual lives.

The insensitivity of reading material such as this should be taken into consideration at this point. Pools are found in the more affluent areas of South Africa and Tshwane, as swimming is traditionally a sport and leisure activity that is dominated by white South Africans. In an article in the Mail&Guardian, Rebecca Harrison (2006) writes that Apartheid era white children spent school holidays "playing in the private pools that are virtually a fixture of middle-class suburban homes", whereas, "few black children had even seen a swimming pool due to poor facilities in former black-only schools and neighbourhoods". Desai and Veriava (2010: 14) write that a culture of leisure and privilege, seen in the pervasiveness of private swimming pools in white South Africa, remains alien to the majority of the population – this, as the authors write – "in a context where even the most basic facilities for recreational swimming are massively inadequate, or simply don't exist". In South Africa, black people were also historically discouraged from swimming, with institutionally endorsed pseudo-scientific reasons provided for this (Braun, cited in Lapchich, 1975, in Desai & Veriava, 2010: 22). Although it is not likely that any of the participants may have thought specifically about incidences such as these, the fact that black people were stereotyped as physically *unable* to swim because of a physical "flaw", is a myth perpetuated in globally today (Kachipanda, 2013). The very discourse surrounding pools, or the social forms of organisation (Hodge & Kress, 1988: 6) which surround the notion of swimming and swimming pools, could be irrelevant to the culture of the participants in this study.

Kress (2011: 247) writes that modes are socially shaped over long periods of time and consequently need to be considered alongside the social groups in which they appear. He stresses the importance of asking: "[w]hat are taken to be modes in this community, in this social group?". From an illustrator's point of view, the relevance of modes of representation, from material choices to content, is well illustrated by the reaction to this book. It also points to a need for more locally relevant context in reading programmes hosted in low SES areas. Crawford and Hade (2000: 66) also suggest that "just as readers' experiences can enhance a narrative by helping them construct meaning based on a particular sign, a lack of prior experience also can influence the telling". In the above example, the social shaping of a swimming pool as an object or experience of leisure, and luxury associated predominantly with white, affluent areas, can be used to demonstrate this.

Elster's (1998) research into influences on children's emergent readings of picture books suggested that visual cues had a noteworthy impact on readings. A reader's perception of a text was greatly reinforced by illustrations. Golden and Gerber's (1990) work shows intertextuality is a large part of children's reading of picture books. Individual illustrations are explored as signs and intertextuality, in which the picturebook itself is viewed as a sign. Visual cues can have powerful effects on the ways in which meaning is constructed with regard to story narrative (Golden & Gerber, 1990). Studies such as these affirm reading as a meaning-making experience, which is supported or facilitated by children's ability to respond to visual cues within the text (Crawford & Hade, 2000: 67). Crawford & Hade's (2000: 66) 'sense-making through intertextuality' was also noted in participants' interpretation of illustrations. Participant S6 reflected on reading The Princess and the Frog (a participant-authored wordless book), stating that her children laughed "because the princess is afraid of the frog" and told her that "usually they [princesses] aren't, they pick it up and kiss it! This one is scared!". It was clear that these children had seen a story about similar characters before (as had the parent and child that created the book) and they could easily relate their enjoyment of one story to the other, demonstrating how narratives tend to "lean on other stories", and that our understanding of stories is partly in relationship to other narratives we have read or heard (Yolen, in Sipe, 2000: 73). Sipe (2000:73) writes that this is evidence that very young children spontaneously make these types of intertextual links. In the case of the princess and the frog, the participants could be referring to the traditional fairy tale, to which they may have been exposed at the ECD centre. Disney also released an animated version of the fairy tale in 2009, which the children may have seen on television. Lastly, most texts make references, explicitly or implicitly, to other narratives in our lives, as was seen in Theme 3 where the children assigned character roles to family members or friends, allowing their reading to become a "sense-making process that involves a layering of texts and meanings" (Crawford & Hade, 2000: 66).

One comment by Participant S1 alluded to the final key concept of multimodality as mentioned by Stein (2008: 23), namely, transformative action. Stein writes that a transformative theory of meaning-making juxtaposes itself with traditional views of literacy (as a closed system) in its view of meaning-making as a dynamic process of redesigning signs in response to other signs. Participant S1 explained that her children were confused when confronted with the image of a princess[71] who was not white, to which they had previously been (they would then understand the sign for a princess as a white, female character in a gown). These participants were able to discuss racial stereotypes with regard to popular children's fiction and transform their initial understanding of the sign, the mother reported:

> They did, with this – they say. Mommy. This princess. She is a black one – usually they are white but this one is black. So I explain, a princess is a princess. It doesn't matter what colour her skins is, as long as she is a princess.

Reynolds (2009: 108) notes the ability of picture books to be an intellectual platform from which to build new thinking. Reynolds argues that children's books have the potential to influence the future. By allowing children to challenge stereotypes or "fixed systems of meaning", wordless books can allow for more critical discussion on sometimes difficult topics. S1's conversation with her children is also reminiscent of Johnson's (in Sleek, 2014) findings, which indicated that a readers' tendency to stereotype and judge can be disrupted in the process of reading fiction. This was also seen in Sandy Mourao's (2015) study on children's reading of *Loup Noir* by Antoine Guilloppé, in which children's cultural and subconscious stereotype of wolves as bad was actively challenged.

6.3.2.5 Learning Curve

Tied in with the above findings is the fact that the wordless picturebooks presented a learning curve to the majority of the parents. All of the parents noted that these books were new to them and that they had never tried to read a book that had no text. Multiliteracies propose that learning and knowing should be grounded in everyday experience, "be that the familiar experiences of students' life worlds or immersion in less familiar practical experiences which are nevertheless intelligible because they relate sufficiently to the student's everyday cultural experience or acquired knowledge" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2000a: 239). Considering that reading was not an everyday experience for many of the parents, and that they had never been asked to use wordless picturebooks before, it is not surprising that some needed to experiment with the genre before becoming comfortable using it. However, after the first two weeks of reading and the initial follow-up interviews, some suggestions from the researcher and other participants were made and parents became comfortable with the genre. The design of meaning can then include trial and error.

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[71] This princess was drawn by the illustrator in a manner that represented the character drawn by the child during the story collection workshop, consequently the princess wore a very big dress and a tiara.

For example, after taking the first two books home for a period of two weeks, M1 reported that the books were "more difficult" and "challenging". A number of parents also noted that the lack of words made them have to "think" of a story, rather than relying on one that was already there. M1 said:

> I think, the thing is, the books that we usually get, the ones with words. We usually don't get these kinds of books (the wordless ones), that is why they really enjoyed [these] ones very much. You have to do everything by yourself. Even us, when we grow up, we usually get the ones with words, not these without words … The one with the words I think they spoil us very much, so these ones we have to create something very different. I think these ones are very nice because you have to do things on your own. You can't ... it's like, maybe they give you something, its like no why, like maybe I can see this. But these ones, you have to work.

D5 noted that "[t]here are no words so it means I have to make a story… and I don't know". This parent felt she was under pressure to come up with a story and that she is very tired after work (she has temporary employment). The added pressure of needing to make up a story while reading with her child was a lot for her to handle. One other participant agreed, but said that she had asked her child to tell the story so that she could just listen.

Arizpe (2013: 170) asserts that the "wordless nature of the picturebooks demands a heightened co-authoring role that requires taking risks with the imagination, activating intertextual and cultural knowledge and trusting in the readers' ability to make sense of the story". However, it was clear in the initial interviews that many of the parents had never needed to rely on their own imagination to read books before. Towards the end of the programme, M1 said, "[n]ow that I know how to use these books without words, I can create my own stories with my kids so I am finding them very nice now. Very, very nice. So we are doing our own thing".

Although M1 had perceived her ability to do her "own thing" as empowering, as previously mentioned, this data indicates that the books should be explained to parents before being carelessly circulated in a community. The frustration of not understanding how to use them could damage readers' association of reading for enjoyment. M8 reported that "[i]t was fun, but a bit difficult. Because you just have to go through with her and explain just to come up with a story for her to understand, but I think she enjoyed it". The books were also a challenge to the parents' creativity, as they had not previously been required to create stories for their children. Although some parents found it difficult at first, they started enjoying the freedom to make their own, creative stories, as the programme progressed, just as their children did. Bantu Education had previously devalued the creative and intellectual life of the majority of black South Africans (Chisholm 2006: 143), and the ability of wordless books to serve as a means to assist parents in thinking creatively can also be a means for parents to instil this type of thinking in their children.

As Brown (2016) suggested, the fact that some of the parents may not have had basic literacy skills also needs to be taken into consideration. Wordless picturebooks take the need to read text out of the equation, but deducing meaning from a two-dimensional representation is still a fundamental reading skill which illiterate individuals may not have. Crawford and Hade (2000: 66) also note that a lack of prior experience can also influence an individual's reading of a wordless picturebook. As a result, signs that readers have seen before can lead to unusual interpretations of the illustrations.

6.3.2.6   Learning/Education value for parents was tangible

Although the focus of this study was not on the educational value that these books could offer participants, many of them noted that they felt their children were developing skills and "learning". Although parents did report enjoying the books, there remained a strong emphasis what their children were learning. This reaction draws attention to the earlier discussion on how reading is perceived as a purely educational activity, rather than something that is done for enjoyment.

Participant S1 commented:

> So I realised that these books were very helpful. And they develop a lot of writing and reading skills. Those crayons that you gave us, they used to come say mommy we want to draw. So I let them draw. And I saw some development. She was drawing a tree and drawing a house (saying what she was drawing). [He was] asking his sister what she drew. I feel they have more skills this time because of the book. They didn't know how to draw a house and a tree, or how to draw a car. But they are understanding a lot more.

She also added that "Max and Abongi, they taught vocab and life skills. The kids need to know about these things. This is the most important about these two [books]". Participant S4 commented that "these books are something that are developing skills with her [her daughter]", and S6 said that "they [the wordless picturebooks] are testing their knowledge if they can do better or what. They develop minds". M1 noted that:

> I think these books are very nice for kids, they learn different things every day when they grow up. So I think we have to get more of these, so they can enjoy, and you have to learn them how to read, and, even when they read you can make a little poem for them and they can demonstrate. I mean you can make up anything with this book.

The Nal'iBali workshop had a strong influence on the parents. This indicated that they may not have been aware of *how* to read at home with their children, despite knowing that it was an important activity (as told by their children's school). S1 said:

> [My favourite thing] was that I've learned something about the wordless book, like *Max*, the Nal'iBali people, when they came here, they did something that I didn't realise. When they told us about the book of *Gaps* [the name of the character in the book used in the read aloud]. They introduce the books to us and they asked us, what animal is Gaps, and then we said it was a cow. So when I saw the book of *Max*, I also introduced it and I asked them, I said 'hey I can use this

> Nal'iBali method, and I asked them [her children] what kind of animal is max and they said it was
> a cat, and I was impressed!

Feedback like this is indicative of the fact that reading programmes cannot take for granted that the parent already has an understanding of what joint reading is. S1 had tried before the programme to read with her children and was very outspoken about the benefits of reading before taking the wordless picturebooks home, but only realised during the programme that she could make use of reading strategies to make reading with her children easier for her and more enjoyable for her children. Much of the findings indicate that there is a definite learning curve with the use of wordless picturebooks in the home, but perhaps there is a learning curve that needs to be addressed in all instances where parents are being told to read with their children. S1's experience also reminds us of Cooper et al.'s (2013) mother-infant book-sharing training programme and the results that were yielded when parents were given basic instructions on how they *could* read to their children. The researcher is of the opinion that this instruction need not be overly strict or interfere with cultural practices, but could provide valuable guidelines for parents such as S1.

S8 commented on the fact that many parents relied solely on the school for education, stating that "[s]ometimes we take it [parenting and community support] just an easy thing. It's *not* an easy thing".

The fact that parents felt the books served some sort of educational purpose can be viewed as positive, in that it was a motivating factor for them to continue reading at home with their children with the aforementioned aspect of "enjoyment" that went hand in hand with the experience. For the children, a pleasant reading experience is being created, while the parent feels that they are actively doing something to help with their child's education.

Parents also felt that the books challenged their own learning, with S6 commenting that "I just enjoy them because they didn't have words. I have to start my own words. So, it teaches me something. That is why I like them". Their own education and knowledge development was something that parents felt was important. M1 also enjoyed the book because "it gives me more knowledge". Participant S11 said that even though she was not very interested in the programme in the beginning, the books did influence her perception of herself as a reader:

> It opens out minds. At first, I was not interested the first time when they told us [about the
> programme]. And the second week they tell me and I said OK I will come. And now I can see I have
> opened my mind a little bit. Now I can see these books at the shops, I know, I can buy it and go
> read it at home.

This could indicate that wordless picturebooks as a genre could be considered for adult literacy training. These would need to incorporate more relevant content in terms of story and narrative, so

that the adults did not feel they are reading "children's books". For example, they could relate to Sean Tan's *The Arrival*, which is illustrated more for mature audiences.

6.3.2.7 Participant-created books – responses and findings

Participant-authored wordless picturebooks were circulated during the last week of the reading programme. As discussed earlier, due to printing delays, participants at the Shoshanguve and Mamelodi sites had seven days to spend with their own books, and two additional participant-authored books from the other Funanani centre (Shoshanguve participants were given books created by participants at the Mamelodi centre and vice versa). Sub-themes discussed here include the types of books created and participants' reactions to their own, and other participant-created books. A comparison of participant feedback on these books, compared to the other, existing wordless books which they had read in the programme, will also be discussed. These first two sections pertain to Research Sites 1 (Shoshanguve) and 2 (Mamelodi) only. The Melutsi Township did not create books, but their reaction to participant-created wordless picturebooks is discussed in 1.3.2.7.3.

6.3.2.7.1 Themes from participant created books

As noted earlier, participants chose to illustrate their books and used emergent reading strategies to co-create a story. The parents documented this story, and with the child's original illustrations, this was given to an illustrator to interpret. In total, 18 prototype books were created – 5 on the Mamelodi site and 13 from the Shoshanguve site. Participants each received two copies of their own books and the library at each research site received one copy of each book created during the programme.

When describing the patterns noted in the Available Designs of meaning (the pictures and words created by the children) and the processes of Designing meaning (creating a story out of these), the following kinds of questions can be asked. Representational questions ask what do the meanings refer to? And social questions try to answer how the meanings are connected to the persons they involve (in this case the participants) (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008: 203-204). Two main themes emerged in the participant authored books: first, that of their family and how they spent time together; and second, places they went to – such as their crèche, the playground or school – and how they interacted with these spaces (they played on the field, they read at school or they played at home with their friends). The images produced by the children and parents then represented their surroundings and participants' realities. The meanings attributed to this were connected with their everyday lives and linked with the participants themselves.

Parents/primary caregivers were given the option of adding to the story or of interpreting their children's illustrations in an imaginative way. Most, however, wrote the story very strictly according to their child's drawings. Consequently, the narratives did not have much of a narrative structure in

terms of story and plot. There were very few stories that contained key conflicts or detailed descriptions of settings and events. Thus, there was no plot that dealt with how, and at what stages, the key conflicts were set up and resolved. Kelly and Baily (2013: 428–429) explain that children tell various kinds of narratives which can include factual accounts of past experience and fictitious stories of make-believe. Kelly and Baily (2013: 428–429) also indicate that the predominant co-constructed narratives which children told with a parent or peer are factual accounts of past events (citing Preece, 1987), "typically in the form of episodic, event-based narratives" (Kelly& Baily, 2013: 428).

When considering development of narrative ability described in the literature, themes that emerged from the stories are to be expected, as the children drew and spoke about things they know and have experienced, and they generally linked one or two events together. Smith, Cowie and Blades (2003: 359-360) note that three-year-old children are developing their narrative skills, basing their stories on lived experience or stories that they have heard from books and the media.

Narratives can be made more complex with the help of parents, who, during social interactions (such as shared book reading) provide support, or scaffolding, to bridge what the child can do on his or her own, and what a child needs assistance with (Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development). Ochs et al. (1989, in Kelly & Baily, 2013: 452) found that adults frequently reinforced children's storytelling by encouraging them to "begin, continue, and add more detail". It was noted that during the storytelling workshops, although parents did to a certain extent prompt their children to tell them about the pictures, they themselves did not elaborate further on what their child was saying, but rather documented the response as it was. Some of the adult participants wrote the story from a third person perspective (or as an objective narrator), using "once upon a time" to start their stories.

Some parents told the story about themselves from a first person perspective; for example, "[T]his is me and my daughter and she likes herself and also trees and the ocean", while others simply described what her child was doing, for example; "She is drawing a sun, she is drawing a cut and paste, she is drawing a dustbin", or wrote what the child asked her to draw" "She said I must draw a place where we stay and a broom". At times, the adult participants were not sure what their children were drawing and it seemed that the prompts to explain also did not clear this up, for example one participant's story included "This is a person, I don't know what this person is doing". Meaning was organised around the drawings specifically, rather than the discussion about the drawings.

Three of the books were slightly different from the others. One story had a clear influence from a movie and included two characters from Disney's *The Princess and the Frog*[72]. In the other two stories,

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[72] The Princess and the Frog is a 2009 American animated musical romantic fantasy comedy-drama film produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios.

the parents themselves decided to elaborate in the writing and also drew some of their own pictures during the workshop. These stories had more substance and included more events that were linked in a logical manner, rather than simply being listed. Two of the parents wrote about their own experience based on their children's drawing, with one parent writing about her experience of being pregnant with her daughter. This particular narrative seemed to be created on her own, rather than in conversation with her child and the available resources were skewed to fit the parent's interests.

This was the first time that many of the participants had engaged in a workshop, or a similar activity, and although all of them expressed that they very much enjoyed the activity and being able to draw and talk with their children, the fact that this was entirely new to them could have contributed to the lack of narrative in the stories. This type of activity was also new to parents, and consequently, the scaffolding needed in co-creating a narrative was not present for the most part. This could be partly as a result of urbanisation, where links with grandparents residing in rural areas, who still have a culture of storytelling, are weakened (Brown, 2016). Other contextual factors cited in the initial focus groups, such as time or poverty, could also hinder parenting activities such as storytelling. Another lesson to take from this is that one cannot assume that parents will know how to engage with their child in an activity like this if they had not been exposed to it before or had experienced it growing up (as all of the participants in these groups probably would not have). Consequently, parents may need to be guided in developing appropriate skills; not to prescribe any specific method, but to provide advice, support and options to parents.

Future storytelling workshops will need to consider the ability of all participants in this regard. The simplicity of many of the stories made it difficult for the illustrators to create an engaging narrative and required that they elaborate on the story by adding visual elements or creating key events using the drawings and story provided by the participants as a starting point. The children were also very young; they could not be expected to produce a narrative that could be used as is. Future story collection workshops may subsequently need to consider including older children and their parents, to have more engaging narratives emerge through the process. One solution could also be to host a number of workshops, in which participants can develop confidence with storytelling over a period of time, and then choose a story which they would like illustrated.

The types of stories created, specifically by the parents who elaborated on their children's writing, is also reminiscent of Adiche's (2009) reflection on her own early writing. Her exposure to books in which the character and content were foreign influenced her early writing, in that she believed every story needed to include something foreign, and that her own culture and identity did not belong in stories that people read. It is not known how much "African literature" the participants have been exposed

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to, apart from magazines such as *Drum*[73] and *Move*, which, although targeting black South African audiences, deal predominantly with celebrity culture and lifestyle articles that are reminiscent of European magazines, such as People Magazine. Rauwerda (2007: 402) argues that *Drum* is ultimately more 'pro-white' than generally acknowledged by many other authors who have written about the magazine and who have failed to acknowledge the more conflicted racial desires that Drum cultivated through its use of advertising alongside articles.

It is possible that access and exposure to previous reading materials and stories had an influence on the stories that both adult and children participants wanted to tell, as noted in Adiche's (2009) talk about how stories can influence the reader's perception of what we should be like, rather than embracing what we are. Participants may have felt that the story they wanted to tell would not have been the kind of story they thought appropriate for a book, or the kind of story that the researcher wanted to hear. Every effort was made to encourage participants that they had the freedom to tell a story of their choice, to elaborate on their child's story or to tell a story that was independent from their child's drawings. The involvement of Nal'iBali in the workshops sought to avoid any expectation of what stories could be told, but this factor will need to be revisited in any subsequent studies and workshops.

Nevertheless, the workshops were described by all participants as being a positive experience and they enjoyed having access to art and craft materials. All participants were provided with a small sketchbook and a pack of crayons to take with them after the workshop, and many noted that they had continued using these in their homes. As noted in the earlier findings, some of the participants also started using "strategies" from the workshop in their reading practice at home, allowing their children to draw elements from their stories or writing down what their child was saying. S11 said that:

> It teach me that I can make my own story even when he draws. He can explain and me, I can write. When we draw the pictures, I can know that – like this one, he draws the pictures and he can explain to me that this is me and my friends watching TV, sitting on the couch and drinking some drinks.

6.3.2.7.2 *Participants reading the books they created*

Participants indicated that reading the participant-authored wordless picturebooks did not differ much from reading the ones that were circulated earlier in the programMe. A few participants found these books "too easy" compared to the others. Participant M1 noted that "[t]hese were very easy.

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[73]Drum magazine was significant during the Apartheid era in South Africa, providing predominantly black Johannesburg readers with entertainment while maintaining an anti-Apartheid stance (Rauwerda, 2007: 393), to the extent that it is argued to be "crucial in South African literary and cultural history' (Driver, 1996: 231, in Rauwerda, 2007: 393).

No difficulties. They were a little too easy. I think they could be a little more difficult, we can get the tougher ones".

The fact that participants found the books too easy may have been due to a lack of visual cues. Golden and Gerber (1990) propose that visual cues powerfully affect the ways in which readers construct meaning with regard to story narrative. Participants only spent a short time with the books, but did note that they were able to construct multiple narratives from the book; it could be postulated that these would not have been as diverse as narratives from the other books because of a lack of visual cues. Many of the books were minimalistic, making us of white space or landscape backgrounds. This was due to a combination of illustrator preference and the fact that the stories were very basic and illustrators were told to not elaborate on them. The illustrators that were sources described this process as "difficult at times", due to lack of plot and characters. The reason for asking participants to create their own picturebooks was to source stories to which participants could relate. This was also the reason that illustrators were asked not to overly elaborate on the stories.

This, however, provided participants with fewer resources from which to create a story. Less detail on the page meant that participants did not spend as much time speaking about the pictures, and highlights the importance of rich, engaging illustrations in wordless picturebooks in this specific context, rather than simple layout. Books such as *Abongi's Journey* makes use of busy pages with rich detail. The elements of the illustration on which participants focus is consequently more open to interpretation; for example, the earlier reference to the bird, who could become a central character in some participant readings, whereas others focused on the detailed depictions of methods of transport. Ryan (2014), argues that pictures have certain narrative strengths when compared to language, in terms of their ability to give the reader an idea of the spatial configuration of the story world. Pictures can suggest emotions using facial expressions and body language. Whereas emotions translated well in the books, the special configuration, with the exception of *All in a Day* (Figure 7.9) and *The Busy House* (Figure 7.15) was not very successful, and could have allowed for a more complicated narrative to arise. It could be argued that the prototype books required more focus in terms of creating a multimodal ensemble.

Going Places (Figure 7.6) made use of vectors (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996: 56-57) by using the main character's gaze to direct the reader's attention to the next element of the story. The book weaves together different transport means – such as a car, aeroplane and a spaceship. The character's gaze points the viewer in the direction of the transport method that he will next make use of and, although the narrative is very basic, a logical sequence is created by building up a relationships between the character and objects.

At times, the paratext provided by the authors did not go with the story. For example, Pabello and the Sun (Figure 7.7) was the title provided by participants for their book, but the narrative dealt with a boy playing soccer. The sun is mentioned once in the written story as a cue for the boy to play outside ("the boy was playing outside after he see the sun"). However, the rest of the book focuses on the character's interaction with his father, who he phones on his mobile phone to ask if he will bring sweets home for him. Harris (2005: 2, 5) notes that paratextual devices, such as a title, contribute to framing a reader's expectations and assists in the interpretation of illustrations, establishes a sense of purpose, and influences desire to step inside the text and read on. In *Pabello and the Sun*, the sun does not feature, apart from being an indication that it is light enough to go outside and play. Consequently, the paratext may be misleading to readers of the book. In *Kamagelo's Friends* (Figure 7.8), however, paratext served as a method to assist in interpreting what could otherwise have been a confusing story. Kamagelo is a character who draws two pictures, one of a baboon and the other of a giraffe. These friends come to life and the book ends with them all watching television together. The indication of "friends" in the paratext indicates that these two animals, who have magically appeared from the drawings, are friendly, rather than scary or threatening. The researcher was concerned during the illustration that readers might not understand the concept that the character created his own friends, but all participants who read the book, including those at Site 3, noted that they did not have any problems interpreting the book.

In terms of intertextuality, the only book that was easily recognised by participants as a story they had heard before was *The Princess and the Frog* [a book created at the Mamelodi site] (Figure 7.5). The princess in the story was described by the authors as owning two cell phones and many cats. However, as noted before, the story deferred from what participants had related to previously, in that the princess was afraid of the frog, and that the princess was a black woman, rather than a white woman. S4 noted that the last week with the participant-authored books was interesting. She really enjoyed the *Princess and the Frog*, and she and her daughter were laughing when reading it, "because she [the princess] was so scared of the frog and got on the chair". Participants were easily able to refer to their previous knowledge of the story, and were amused when this princess had the frog chased away by her cats, rather than kissing it in the hope that it would turn into a prince. This book was also the participant-authored book that was noted as the favourite in both groups, aside from the participant's own stories.

All in a Day (Figure 7.9) reminded some participants of *A Very Nice Day*, one of the existing picturebooks that was circulated during the programme. It was consequently easy for them to use, as they had made stories from *A Very Nice Day* before. S7 said that *All in a Day* was their favourite participant-produced book noting that her son "…was doing the story. He was explaining it like *A [Very]*

Nice Day. He was telling as if it is him. As if they wrote about him". S1 said that she felt as if *All in a Day* was teaching her children about "life and reality". She said that they could easily tell where the characters in the story were going; for example, to college. Participants were able to apply *All in a Day* to their own lives, as they had done with *Abongi's Journey, Max* and *A Very Nice Day*, and this added to their enjoyment of the book. Future programmes, in which participants create their own books, could provide a story prompt, for example, for participants to write about a day in their life, as a means to create content which readers can apply and relate to; for example, a bus journey to work or school. Readers were also able to draw on personal experience to create meaning from pictures (Arizpe 2010: 201) in books like *Mahau and Gontse* (Figure 7.10) and *The Crèche* (Figure 7.11), which dealt with the daily activities of the characters. Mahau and Gontse, the two characters in the books, are two brothers who wake up, get ready for their day and then go the school together. They spend time playing soccer on the field after school before going home. *The Crèche* followed a similar theme, but dealt with events at the main character's school, such as reading with the teacher. Books like *Thulani's Party (Figure 7.12)*, *The Baby (Figure 7.13)* and *Mom and Me (Figure 7.14)* were not mentioned specifically by any of the participants who had read them. This could be because the subject matter was specific to the participants who created it. *The Baby*, for example, dealt with the mother's trip to the hospital to give birth and made for some awkward discussion, even with the authors. One participant (code not noted here as not to link the book with the author) said that she liked her own book a lot, but the child didn't understand why there was a baby in her mom's belly. She told her not to worry, and that she would explain when she is older.

Kalantzis and Cope (2008: 203-204) suggest that the question of how meanings connect the persons they involve should be asked when considering that meanings are made using different modes of meaning, which are increasingly interrelated. *The Busy House* (Figure 7.15) is a case in point. The authors of the book easily recognised the carpet as the one they had written about in their story, and consequently it was central to their meaning-making process. The carpet was seen as the place where the family would gather and relax, whereas other participants focused more on the people in the book and where they were going, citing the house as the place to which the family would return, rather than the carpet. Nodelman (1988) notes that creating meaning from wordless picturebooks often includes a reader's own historical background, and this was demonstrated by the personal significance of a household item to the participants.

The inclusion of elements of the participant's drawings in the books proved successful in creating interest in the books; especially with the younger children, as they recognised their drawings in the books. These became an aspect of ownership for the participants. M1 said that her daughter saw her own pictures in the book and "she didn't want the rest [of the family] to touch it". Examples of this

are included in Figure 7.16. Participants were very proud to see their children's drawings used in the illustrations and commented on this when the books were being handed out. They immediately recognised elements of their work from the workshop, and the researcher believes that this inclusion made the books more meaningful to participants than if they had been illustrated without these elements. The association with books is thus more personal, with many of the participants expressing relief that they had one copy which they could keep safe to show their children when they were older.

Due to the printing delay, participants spent less time with these books than the other ones, and they indicated that they felt one week was too short to really get to know the books and enjoy them. Their children would ask to read the books from the previous week, such as *Max* and *Abongi's Journey*. This had happened earlier in the programme, where the children enjoyed spending time with the books as they became more familiar with them; this is not viewed as negative feedback on the participant-authored books, but rather indicates that the children need time to become accustomed to and enjoy a particular book. Participants expressed enjoyment reading the books created by other participants.

All participants expressed a sense of pride when discussing their own books and were impressed that their names appeared on the front cover and that they were the authors of the story. This was the case both with the parents/primary caregivers and the children. Participant S8 said, "I'm proud, I'm proud" and Participant S1 explained their reaction as follows: "… we were excited! Am I actually reading a book that my child wrote? It was very exciting!" Participant S6 reported the reading experience: "It was good, because, eish, I was very proud reading my own book". This is an important aspect of the research. Confidence in reading can be linked with self-confidence and motivation, as discussed in the section on achievement motivation. The creation of books consequently fulfilled another aim; to give people confidence their own ability to tell stories and create books.

The children would want to read their own books a number of times, even in the short span of time. Participant S14 reported: "Mine [her book] is already damaged!". The children were proud of their own stories, a sentiment further explained by S14 in her comment that her children "[They] say, this is my story! My kids were fighting, this is my book, and this is my book!" Participant M1, for whom reading had become a family activity, noted that her other children also wanted their own books. She said "[e]verybody wants to take it so that we can read. They all want their own books. Where is mine? … [her daughter] recognized her [illustrations], she didn't want the rest to touch it!". A sense of pride that others would encounter their books was also expressed by participant M1, who said: "[Child's] name is in the Funanani library, oooh!"

6.3.2.7.3   Circulation of participant created books at Melutsi Township

Of the initial 19 participants at the Melutsi Township, only 8 participants arrived for the second focus group, leading to 22 of the books meant for circulation being lost. Other participants forgot their books at home, and as a result, the schedule needed to be adapted for the remainder of the reading programme. Back-up books were acquired, which included *Abongi's Journey, The Rainbow Birds* and A *Very Nice Day*, as well as Diek Grobler's *1,2,3*. Copies of *Max* and *The Swimming Pool* could not be sourced for this programme as they were out of stock, but the programme continued with the limited books available and parents who attended all sessions read a total of five books.

As the one of the primary aims of the site was to pilot test books created at Mamelodi and Shoshanguve, the participant response to these books will be discussed as a theme. The majority of participants reported that the books were easy to use. Participant D8 noted: "I don't know if I got the easy ones – but it was really easy for me and my children to use at home". She was, however, surprised that her child "knows [knew] everything that is in the book". All parents reported that it was easy for them to make a story from the pictures in the book and that their children were able to use them independently. One parent noted that she read the books to her children on the first day, and thereafter they read to her or for themselves. She said "He would go get the book himself, and tell a story using the pictures"(D16).

These books were the first ones introduced in the programme, and even with the introduction of *Abongi's Journey, A Very Nice Day*, *The Rainbow Birds* and *1,2,3*, some of the parents reported that the participant-created books remained their favourites (*Mahau and Gontse* and *Kamagelo's Friends* were mentioned by two participants as being their favourites). However, the participants did note that these books were easier to use, and that they and their children found books like *Abongi's Journey* to be more challenging and spent more time reading them. The simplicity of the participant-created books could then serve as a good way to introduce beginner readers to the concept of wordless picturebooks and form the foundation for reading more complex, complicated books. However, the fact that these books were "too easy" was highlighted here again and needs to be considered for future workshops.

6.3.3   Concluding the programmes

Final interviews and group interviews at Mamelodi and Shoshanguve and a focus group at the Melutsi Township were held to conclude the programmes. These also served as a debriefing tool for participants. Participants were invited to express their opinion on the programme, describe their

experience and make suggestions about how they wanted to proceed should the reading programme continue in future.

Participants who completed the programme expressed willingness to take part in similar programmes, and also suggested that the bi-weekly programme be ongoing throughout the year. The said that they felt the programme should start earlier in the year, as they had started enjoying it and were disappointed that it had come to an end. When reflecting on their personal experience of the programme and of reading wordless picturebooks, participants were generally positive, expressing that they had learned something about reading, or about themselves.

Reflecting on the programme as a whole, participant M1 noted:

> Ja, its been two months and it's been an interesting journey for me and my kids. Hey are now starting to enjoy reading and asking things on their own after these ones came. Like I said the ones that they had have words, not they have to make their own so I think we should get more of these books. Yes, they are reading more, because its not the same thing… I like them [wordless picturebooks], they are more challenging, you have to make up your own mind and create your own story. The other ones you see the pictures but you just read and you know what's happening there. My favourite thing is the books and everything in them, because it gives me more knowledge.

Parenting capabilities and responsibilities were also a theme that emerged in the final interviews. Participant S8 in particular noted that "[w]ith more books you can encourage the other mothers that they have to do this. And the support group. I have the granny support group", "I think if we get more books we can do this with the kids and then you can do this with the kids at home. There are some parents that think that they do this at the school and they [the school] can do everything for them". S8 gave the book that she and her daughter had created to a different crèche in the vicinity– one that her daughter would sometimes attend. She said:

> it gave us a responsibility for our kids, that we can take responsibility to help the teachers at school – the teachers must work hard for the child. At least the parents they can give us something. Even [Child's name] own book – I gave it to the school [she attends another day care], so that they can explain to everyone that if it is like this, they can create this out of it. So that it can be different and that you can create new things. Think if it is a princess you can create a new thing. That you must understand that even if they say it is something else than that's ok for them.

Participants also suggested hosting similar programmes for the surrounding community, with S8 stating, "[l]et us get it outside so you can stop the kids to be afraid of a book. You must get a book to see it is enjoyable inside". M1 echoed this sentiment, saying that she thinks older children should also be involved "[w]hat I can say is that I think we should, when we have the sessions, we not only do this for the young ones. Even the bigger ones, same room, creating our own stories, reading".

Whereas the overwhelmingly positive feedback can be read as a skewed relationship between the researcher and participants, another factor that should be considered is the participant group. On reflection of the findings with The Funanani Trust's management, it was noted that the group that had been invited to volunteer for the study was a very positive group, having been very involved in the programmes that the school had offered throughout the year. This was not the case at the Mamelodi centre, and this could be seen very clearly in the participant retention. Subsequently, the general attitude and willingness of the parents to be involved in the programme also had an impact on their reading activity. The Funanani Trust has also been involved in the Shoshanguve community for the past 19 years, and believes that they have established a relationship of openness and mutual respect between all stakeholders at the centre. As a result, there has been a lot of involvement from white individuals who have been employed by, or volunteered at the centre, and the management believe that their relationship is based on honesty and mutual respect, which, to a large extent has helped overcome race issues that could possibly influence research at the site.

All of them reported that having access to books through the day care centre had made things much easier for them. Access to books then played a major role in their reading habits, as was suggested by Nassimbeni and Desmond's (2011) study.

Reading programmes were concluded on all three sites and it was agreed that on completion of the study, we would discuss implementing a longer reading programme at the site. Even though the programme had been completed, a number of parents are still in touch with the researcher and sometimes ask for new books. An integral part of this research was forming relationships with research participants and the centre at which their children were enrolled. At the onset of the research, it was decided that regardless of the findings, the relationship with the research sites and participants would continue after the completion of the study, as directed by participant suggestions and identification of needs. There has been much criticism of research programmes that investigate phenomena in low socio-economic contexts, and on completion, leave participants in the same state as they were prior to the study. Participative Action Research (PAR), however, focuses on creating meaningful and sustainable change, and it was therefore acknowledged from the onset that the researcher's involvement at all sites would extend beyond the time frame of this study, until such a time as a solution has been agreed on my participants and set in place and when a feedback loop for improvement had been established. Within the context of the Mamelodi and Shoshanguve sites, the affiliation with an existing NGO, which has had an established relationship with the communities, will allow for the continuation of the reading programme which can in future be facilitated by the teachers and/or community members, without the direct involvement of the researcher.

Options for a continuation of the programme is currently being discussed with The Funanani Trust, and the yearly creation of wordless picturebooks by Shoshanguve and Mamelodi community members is being considered as a means to build up a library of local content for the two ECD centres. This library can then be managed by the parents of the children who attend the ECD programme, and possibly linked to an incentive programme that has recently been launched at the Shoshanguve centre. Funding for a continuation of a book creation programme will be sought in January 2017, with October – November 2016 being used to collate proposals for the reading programme and to discuss implementation with The Funanani Trust's management, the Shoshanguve and Mamelodi centre managers, teachers and facilitators and parents. At the time of hand in, an appointment with NEA and Happy Sabby Day Care's management has been made for mid-October 2016 to discuss how we could implement a book lending programme for the community, with Happy Sabby as the contact point. Participants will be asked for their input and willingness to be involved in this programme as a means to empower the community, rather than have the lending programme managed by an outside source.

6.3.4   Contextual Factors

Research at all three sites encountered certain contextual factors that influence the participant retention rate. These contextual factors will be discussed separately, as it is felt that they provide an important background for the research and will also assist in planning any future reading programmes based in low SES communities.

In engagement in parenting programmes, exploring facilitators of and barriers to participation, authors Wessels et al. (2016:1) write that:

> Supporting parents in their role as caregivers is central to national development and violence prevention in South Africa. While being a parent can be demanding in any context, parents in South Africa typically face a great number of challenges. These challenges relate especially to poverty, which can make parenting in a positive way much more difficult. Living in poor neighbourhoods or high-violence areas may affect parenting in a variety of ways.

Although violence was not reported as a barrier to reading in any of the three sites, the violent protests in Shoshanguve – which started just after the reading programme had concluded – and service delivery protests – which affected the areas surrounding the Melutsi Squatter Camp in June and July of 2016 – indicate that these areas are surrounded by violence. The crime statistics in Shoshanguve have also led it to be classified as an "unsafe" area by police. According to a police spokesperson, areas identified by a police report as being "unsafe" included the Shoshanguve Crossing Mall, (Dzimba, 2014) which was very close to the ECD. Crime statistics released in September 2015, at the time of the reading programme, indicated that the murder rate in Mamelodi had "spiked" and house robberies had increased from April 2014 to January 2015 (Mashego, 2015). On a more direct level, Participant

M1 had been mugged on her way home; the perpetrators had taken the money intended for her child's new school uniform (she had an older child in primary school). She was extremely worried and anxious the next day, because the R300 that they had taken from her was money that she could not replace. She had not had employment for the last 12 months; she was retrenched when her employer moved overseas. At the interview that day, she spoke in depth about how much she had enjoyed working for her previous employer, and that, although she had been trying, she had struggled to find other permanent employment. The R300 may seem like very little to those in positions of privilege, but to M11, it was "a lot of money". To some extent, violence did have a direct impact on the programme, although it should be noted that M1 did not miss any of the programme sessions. The emphasis on R300 as "a lot of money" also points to the level of poverty in which many of the participants in the study were living.

Wessels et al. (2016: 4) report that structural barriers are often the main reasons for low parent involvement in parenting programmes. The most frequently stated barrier related to this was transport. Participants in the study would walk to the centre, depending on their proximity. In Mamelodi, sessions were held at a time when parents would drop off or pick up their children from the ECD centre, so that participants would not need to travel unnecessarily. In Shoshanguve, transport was arranged for those who did not live within walking distance from the centre, and sessions were also arranged around the start or end of a school day. However, the participants who did live within walking distance sometimes noted transport as an issue, as they had physical injuries that made walking even the small distance difficult. On such occasions, when informed of this, the researcher would collect the participants from their homes and take them back after the interview. The Melutsi Township was a very small camp, and Happy Sabby was within walking distance for all participants. These types of considerations fall into what Wessels et al. (2016: 6) refer to as 'structural facilitators'. In their study, parents liked that the programmes fitted in with dropping off and fetching children from school, and parents who lived close to the programme venue identified this as a facilitator, as they were able to walk to the programme.

Poverty, although the parents did not speak outright about it, was also noted in the group, with many parents saying that they did not have access to books or writing and drawing materials. The majority of the Funanani parents relied on government grants, and it was unclear of the financial status of the Melutsi Township participants; suffice to say, the squatter camp consisted solely of informal structures, or shacks, built from scrap material. Participants' excitement at the orange squash and biscuits, as noted in the findings, also hints at their current financial status. These items formed part of the research budget, and were not viewed as being an exorbitant expense. However, participants' reaction to them made it apparent that these were not items that they could regularly afford.

Gaining employment was a structural barrier that appeared in this study and which is also noted in Wessels et al.'s (2016: 4-5) study. The parents in the Melutsi Township specifically noted that their employment schedule was unpredictable, as they found piece work irregularly. This unstructured schedule posed difficulties for parents in terms of their ability to commit to a set day and time each week for programme sessions. Parents further commented that their long working hours made them want to spend their time off resting, completing household tasks and running errands, rather than attending a programme (Wessels et al., 2016: 4-5). One Shoshanguve participant also found full-time employment and consequently could not attend further sessions. She did, however, take part in telephone interviews, but soon fell behind in terms of returning books and collecting new ones, despite efforts to send books home with her child or other participants. In the initial focus group, participants on the Mamelodi site noted that they were often too tired to read with their children after work, or that household chores were a barrier to how much time they could allocate to reading. M8 was the youngest of the group and was enrolled in tertiary studies, which impacted her reading at home. She said: "I read them like three times because I had to study". She did continue to make an effort to read, but stopped attending interview sessions after the second session. In a group interview with M1 and M2, who were the only two to attend interviews that day, they expressed their frustration that the other parents weren't attending sessions. M1 said: "[W]e have to make time to do this with our children. We can say we are so busy and tired but it is important to *make* time". Questions that need to be raised here is how facilitators can make attending these programmes as easy as possible for the participants. Saturday sessions could be offered in addition to the weekly programme sessions to accommodate working parents.

The venue at Melutsi Squatter Camp was a serious structural barrier for the programme, as weather conditions hindered the use of the area; for example, it could not be used while it was raining and on cold days the focus group needed to be moved indoors. Distraction from classrooms and children proved challenging on these occasions. The recording of focus groups also suffered, as the recording device picked up all the noise in the surrounding area and it was difficult to transcribe data accurately. Much of what the participants said were lost on the recording and hand-written notes were relied on to accurately report findings. Although the venue was ideal in terms of proximity to participant homes, it identified other challenges that need to be considered in arranging programmes; for example, the size of a venue and its ability to shelter participants from bad weather.

Personal Barriers are described by Wessels et al. (2016: 5) as "participants' being physically or mentally unwell or needing to collect their medication from the clinic, or having to care for sick family members". Illness played a role at the Shoshanguve site, with one participant suffering a stroke. Although she tried to attend sessions once she had recovered enough for transport, she could not

remember reading any of the books or creating a book with her child. M13's child had medical problems, and she subsequently had to spend time waiting for a doctor to see him at the clinic. She said "I didn't read. I was busy you know. My child was injured".

Addiction was also identified as a barrier to participation at the Mamelodi site, with one participant who attended sessions, but did not participate in discussions. She did not read at home with her son because she was "having problems". The other parents said that she was addicted to alcohol and was being treated for this. Wessels et al.'s (2016: 6) study also noted alcohol abuse as being rife in participant communities. In their study, the participants noted that "parents often prioritise drinking over self-care and family responsibilities". These types of factors are Important to note for 'at risk' communities and also a factor to consider for programmes like this in the future.

There were also aspects in this study that were noted as being motivational factors for taking part in the study, the most prominent being what Wessels et al. (2016: 7) refer to as family buy-in. In their study, this appeared to be an important facilitator of attendance; and participants mentioned how their families supported their involvement in the programme. In this study, family buy-in was most clearly noted in participant M1, whose older children enjoyed the books and were an integral part of their reading practice. Although she was a single mother, the family buy-in from her older children was a clear motivating factor for her to continue attending sessions.

6.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main themes identified in this section have described how wordless picturebooks were used in participant homes, specifically with regard to notions of Design (New London Group, 2000). The key findings were positive, with participants reporting that the genre was easy to use and enjoyable. Transformation was evident in their relationship with reading, and also in participant pairs, their relationship with each other. Participants were easily able to use the available resources provided by the books and also bring their own resources to the reading sessions as a means of creating their own stories. The multimodal nature of the genre was seen in participants' ability to engage in other activities, such as using the books to draw a picture or write a story. The materiality of modes was also seen in the reading process, where the body was involved in terms of pointing, or reading rituals such as the "Nal'iBali dance" were used. Wordless picturebooks extended the reading activity to other cognitively stimulating activities and the books allowed for engagement with other sensory modes. The participant-created wordless books were described as being too easy by participants, and consequently this aspect of future programmes will need to be reconsidered.

Contextual factors had an impact on the study, with poor participant retention at all research sites. However, when comparing findings from the initial focus groups to those at the end of the reading programmes, a hopeful picture of wordless picturebooks' ability to foster a culture of reading in the home emerges. In conjunction to the fact that families had access to books in their homes, the research points to the importance of identifying appropriate materials that parents/primary caregivers can use to scaffold their children's reading in the home and, as a result, be empowered as their child's first educator.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1   INTRODUCTION

South Africa has a very low general reading rate, with only 5% of parents reading to, or with their children (SABDC, 2007). Consequently, many children are not encouraged to read for enjoyment; their parents often do not have a reading culture of their own. As a result, many children do not have access to books before they go to school, which can be seen as contributing the fact that South African children fall behind in terms of emergent literacy (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Consequently, the importance of activities that cognitively stimulate children, such as joint reading, has gained increased attention. Reading in the home is, however, not always as simple as it seems, with socio-economic conditions such as extreme poverty, or the parents' own levels of literacy acting as a barrier to engaging in reading in the home.

This research sought to determine whether the introduction of wordless picturebooks into participant homes could foster a culture of reading between parents/primary caregiver and their three to six-year-old children. Through a story collection workshop, the research also sought to determine participant reactions to reading books that were created in their own community, incorporating content to which they could relate.

A qualitative approach within a constructionist paradigm was used to approach the topic, with participative action research used as the research design. In total, 42 participant pairs (each comprising a parent/primary caregiver and their three to six-year-old child) participated in the study, which was conducted at three sites through the implementation of a reading programme. However, participant retention was very low, with only 14 participant pairs completing the entire programme. Sites 1 and 2 incorporated a story collection workshop, resulting in 18 participant-authored books created between the two sites. Site 3 served as a means to pilot test these books in a different community. It should however be noted that even though the number of participants that completed the *entire* programme, in other words, who attended all sessions, was low, that data pertaining to the reading experience after the implementation of the programme was collected from 39 participants in total.

Literacy and illiteracy, as well as the reading development of children was used as a context for this study, but was not the focus of the primary research. Rather, these factors are regarded as barriers to cultivating a culture of reading in South African homes. As a white, female, the study does not assume that the researcher is able to suggest or simply create content for the communities or contexts in

which the research was conducted. The story collection workshop thus served as an important aspect of creating content that participants could relate to, and as a means to empower communities through their participation in this project.

7.2   CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study was aimed at exploring the use of wordless picturebooks in participant homes to foster a culture of reading in literacy-poor areas. In order to guide the study, a number of research questions were formulated. Key findings related to these questions will be discussed in this section. The theoretical framework provided the study with a good conceptual basis to understand and interpret the research results.

The primary research question was stated as follows:
How does a participatory project in which children, parents/primary-caregivers and the researcher partake, influence the various stake holders' perceptions about the use of wordless picturebooks in the home?

The sub-questions were:
1.   What are participants' perceptions and attitudes towards reading with wordless picturebooks (both parent/primary caregiver and child); namely, do they find value in doing this activity at home?
2.   Are participants able to incorporate reading with wordless picturebooks as part of the daily routine using wordless picture books and if they do, how do they go about doing it?
3.   How do participants experience reading wordless picturebooks that are produced in and by their community, as opposed to books provided by schools and libraries?
4.   What kinds of themes are introduced when parents and children are able to create their own stories for books, or to "produce" and create their own wordless picturebooks?
5.   What kinds of multiple narratives emerged in visual texts produced by parents and children from different community groups during the reading sessions?

The key findings indicated a predominantly positive response to the use of wordless picture books in participant homes. There was a transformation in the reading relationship between participants and children and in the relationship between participants and the reading activity itself. Participants reported that they and their children enjoyed reading the books, individually or in a shared reading activity. The value that participants identified focused mostly on the education value of the books, with parents reporting that they felt their children were developing skills – including vocabulary and

visual literacy skills – or simply increasing their knowledge. Parents/primary caregivers also said that they felt the books increased their own knowledge and confidence in reading. Participants reproduced and transformed the available resources through the multilingual use of the wordless picturebooks. It was noted that all participants translated the stories from their mother tongue language to English. In South Africa, English is used as a medium of instruction from Grade 4, but the parents felt it was important for their children to be able to use the language. The literature also revealed that there exists a false perception among many parents and school principals that English as a language of learning is a means for children to "get ahead" and for schools to increase enrolment.

Participant reactions to their own reading practices at home indicated that books and reading were not necessarily embedded in the participants' views of parenting activities. Very few of the parents read with their younger children, and when they did read at home it was with their school-going children. The older children subsequently read to the three to six-year-olds, rather than the parents, who would read on their own (if they read at all). As previously noted, parents/primary caregivers linked reading with the educational benefits that it could offer, rather than a way to spend time with their children. It was noted at the start of the research that the majority of adult participants did not have a history of reading and did not grow up in a household where parents read with them; this could be a factor that contributed to the lack of reading culture in participants' homes.

In concluding the programme, however, a number of participants reported a value that relates to the emotional bond between them and their children, as expressed by spending time with their child, hugging or the child saying "I love you", which was promoted by the reading activity. This is important when considering that the context of the research was located in areas where community violence, poverty and other linked issues are rife. The use of wordless picturebooks to create a story can be a cathartic means for children and parents to be debriefed from traumatic experiences. Shared book reading can also assist in creating a positive and friendly parenting style. Often, parents who are exposed to poverty and violence have harsh parenting styles, which can impact negatively on children's development (Wessels et al., 2016).

Access to books was also cited as a major barrier to reading, and parents had little awareness of what appropriate reading material for preschool children was, often making use of school books, bibles or magazines when they did read with their children. The inability of their children to interact with these materials caused parents to experience their reading activity as frustrating.

Participants at all three sites consistently reported that their reading frequency at home had increased with the introduction of the wordless picturebooks. Reading increasing from "sometimes" or "once a week" – reported in initial focus groups – to becoming a daily activity in participant homes. Access to

books was a major influencing factor in this, as participants had previously reported having few books in their homes and the library was not viewed as a realistic option for sourcing books.

This was mainly attributed to the fact that participants had access to books in their homes and that the wordless picturebooks were easy for participants to use. Parents/primary caregivers who had previously used magazines, school books or the bible to read with their children noted that their reading experience had become less frustrating and that their children were better able to concentrate and understand during the reading activity. Some of the parents noted that they now realised that the books they had been using were simply too advanced for their children to read. Exposure to joint reading in the home provided parents/primary caregivers with more insight into the value of age-appropriate books. The literature found that appropriate scaffolding materials in shared activates between parents and children are essential in developing a child's confidence in their ability to complete a task. The fact that children started initiating their own reading is a testament to the success of wordless picturebooks in facilitating children's confidence in reading and creating their own stories. Three parents also reported that they enjoyed reading the wordless picturebooks on their own, with one noting that she now felt she could go and buy these books for herself, because she would know how to use them. It can be concluded that the genre was perhaps "less threatening" to both parents and children.

The multimodal nature of the books also allowed for participants to engage in other activities, such as using the books to draw a picture or write a story (with the older children). Wordless picturebooks can extend "reading" to other cognitively stimulating activities, and the books allowed for engagement with other sensory modes.

The story collection workshop, in which the facilitators from Nal'iBali modelled book sharing and included song, dance and storytelling in their reading activity, is viewed by the researcher as an extremely important aspect of the research. The workshop demonstrated the multimodal nature of reading and the materiality of reading, as it incorporated singing and dancing. Many of the parents from Sites 1 and 2 (Shoshanguve and Mamelodi) referred to this workshop and reading activity throughout the programme, noting that they had previously not realised that they could share a book in the manner that Nal'iBali had presented. The fact that they could engage in the workshop in their mother tongue, and that the story was also read to them in a multilingual manner, using English and participant's home languages, also assisted in helping parents realise that they did not need to use English to read to their children. These findings indicate that one cannot simply assume that parents/primary caregivers who may have low levels of literacy will know how to share books with their children in a manner that makes the activity meaningful and enjoyable for both adults and children. Whereas the researcher believes in a non-prescriptive implementation of reading, so that

participants can read in a way that best suits them, the value of guidance and options that parents were provided with was very clear, especially compared to participant reactions at Site 3 (Melutsi Township), who did not have exposure to Nal'iBali. The retention rate at this site was much lower than the previous two, and it seemed as if parents experienced a steeper learning curve in using the books in their homes. The books allowed for easier engagement if their use had been demonstrated before. Visual role modelling in mother tongue can subsequently become the importance and motivation for becoming hooked on reading at home.

The non-directive way of implementing the programme seemed to give participants a sense of empowerment, as they could use the books in their own manner and preference. Parents reported different ways of reading at home with their child or while they were engaged in other activities – asking the child to tell them a story using the wordless picturebook. The researcher believes that this type of non-prescriptiveness is especially important in the South African context where multiple cultures co-exist. Also, given the history of the country, where Apartheid laws prescribed certain norms and standards to non-white population groups, a culture of empowerment is especially important.

Participant-created wordless picturebook, which served as prototypes in this study, were reported to be too easy compared to the existing books that were circulated. These simple narratives could serve as a good introduction to wordless picturebooks as a genre, but the prototype books indicated that more complexity was needed in illustrators' interpretation of participant stories. Illustrators were asked to not elaborate on stories, but to illustrate only what the participants had written. The books were consequently very simplistic, with little narrative structure and plot. Participants who had read the exiting books before the participant-produced books, reported that they would prefer something more challenging, while participants from Site 3, who were given the participants' books before the existing books, simply reported that they were very easy to use. Producing a finished wordless picture book is not a simple exercise, and given the time frame of this study, was not considered an objective. The stories collected in the workshops were not intricate enough to serve as the foundation of a well designed wordless picturebook, and it is likely that collecting stories that could serve this purpose would take a considerable amount of time. The illustration, layout and production of the books, which in this study was done in under two weeks, would also be a time intensive project that would require more resources than what were made available for this research.

Participants from Sites 1 and 2 where the books were produced did, however, report that they enjoyed the content of the participant-produced books and could relate to them easily. There was a great sense of pride in their own books, in seeing their names on the covers and in reading these at home with their children and family. A sense of mastery and empowerment was achieved by the production

of these books, which, regardless of the lack of narrative, is an aspect of the prototypes that should not be overlooked.

The themes that emerged from the stories dealt with the children's immediate environments. Very few of the parents elaborated on their children's stories. The literature indicated that by the age of three, children should ideally have developed confidence in storytelling, in that they have an understanding of the basic conventions of a story (Smith, Cowie & Blades 2011: 419). The children's lack of reading experience in their home may have had an influence on their storytelling at the workshop, as they had a limited number of other stories to which they had been exposed. The importance of children's early exposure to a variety of appropriate literature – as a means to broaden their environment and concepts – is highlighted here. The relevance of the material to the reader's context should, however, still be considered to ensure that the child can engage with the story.

Another aspect that should be considered here is that the children may have felt under pressure to come up with a story in the presence of a researcher, who they did not know well at all. The power relationship here could have been overwhelming and could have negatively affected their willingness to share or produce stories.

At all three research sites, the stories created using both existing and participant produced wordless picturebooks were very general. Parents did not really expand or initiate explanations of the stories themselves during the interviews or focus groups (with the exception of parents explaining how their children interpreted the last scene of *Abongi's Journey* as a cue for them to express affection towards their mother). In the context in which the research took place, too much probing could possibly have come across as condescending on the part of the researcher. Parents were not used to reading books with their younger children and the stories might have simply been very basic and straightforward. The researcher did not want to alienate participants by insisting that they elaborate on the meaning they had made from the books – the power relationship was sensitive, as described in Chapter 6.

A general trend was that parents/primary caregivers and their children applied stories to their own lives. Parents/primary caregivers consistently reported that the children related with the characters and applied them to their own lives. It was also easy for parents to replace a character name with their own child's name as a means to get their children interested in reading the books. The importance of having access to reading material in which participants can relate to the character, activities and surroundings is consequently an important consideration in this study – as demonstrated by one participant pair's reaction to *The Swimming Pool,* which they could not relate to, did not enjoy and as a result did not read.

In answering the primary question: How does a participatory project in which children, parents/primary-caregivers and the researcher partake, impact the various stake holders' perceptions about the use of wordless picturebooks in the home? In addressing the main aim of the study, which was to investigate how the introduction of wordless picturebooks could foster a culture of reading in the home, the primary research provided very encouraging insight into the potential for these books to be used independently by participants in their homes. The participants' use of wordless picturebooks can be considered as the process of "designing" meaning.

The socio-economic conditions that affect many participants on a daily basis, however, remain a barrier to reading at home, and although wordless picturebooks will not be able to address the reading crisis that South Africa is currently faced with, they could contribute positively to making reading an enjoyable activity for families at home. In this way, they could contribute to better emergent literacy skills for preschool children.

7.3   CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A significant lack of a culture of reading in South Africa has serious effects for the broader context, as was outlined in the literature. In order to address the reading crisis that South Africa faces, the government may need to address the issue on a bigger scale. Research from a linguistic and psychological perspective may be a means to address the complex context in which a South African reading culture is located. The circumstances regarding a culture of reading is further complicated by South Africa's history, with many of the effects of Apartheid still manifest in today's under-resourced areas. Consequently, reading as a form of empowerment and as a means of creating new dialogues, stories and challenging stereotypes, can be more strongly promoted, rather than placing the emphasis on the educational benefits of reading. The study reinforced the notion that the book is not a cultural good in the South African context and is not linked with personal development of enjoyment.

New ways of thinking about literacy and of making literature available in mother tongue need to be explored, both for preschool and children that are past the foundation phase, where mother tongue literature is currently concentrated. Notions of literacy have come a long way from its initial definition as a set of technical skills, to its current view as a human resource skill, capable of implementing socio-cultural and political change (UNESCO 2006: 155). Literacy, especially in the South African context should be considered beyond the ability to read and write, and the means in which we teach literacy needs to extend beyond classrooms and books, to include notions of multiliteracies and the numerous forms of literacy that are found in different cultures (UNESCO, 2006:150). Literacy education should as such acknowledge that different cultures make meaning in manners that are not always similar,

which indicates that the South African government needs to review the type of material that is included in literacy education.

The book will not be considered as a cultural good in South Africa until it is relevant to the culture in which it needs to establish importance. Should the rudimentary definition of literacy remain that of being able to read and write, the book will probably never lose it's association as a purely educational medium. The ability of wordless picturebooks to allow for different methods of meaning-making, as was noted in this study, could help the book lose its association with education and allow for it to be experienced as a means of enjoyment; an aspect which could assist in fostering a culture of reading locally. Creating books that are meant to be read simply for enjoyment, and making these accessible to the populations who would normally not be able to afford them, can serve as a means to challenge the current view that reading is purely for educational outcomes.

The effects of globalisation call for individuals to increasingly be able to distinguish between patterns of meaning from one context to another, including culture, gender and life experience. Consequently, language diversity is more important than ever (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012). Newfield's (2008: 2) assertion that pedagogy should provide access to languages of power, while maintaining an epistemology of pluralism is particularly visible when considering mother tongue education in South Africa, which is becoming an increasingly important debate. The economic costs of producing books in mother tongue is, however, a challenging factor and one of the reasons why these books are often limited to foundation phase materials.

This study indicated that wordless picturebooks are an enjoyable genre, which could be used in a variety of languages. The study also highlighted that although the wordless books were used in participants' mother tongue initially, they were translated into English, which the literature noted is viewed by many parents and schools as a way for children to "get ahead". English as such can be considered a language of power in South Africa. The books were used effectively in eight of the country's 11 official languages. Regardless in which language the books were read, participants were able to use the genre as a means to facilitate storytelling and other activities. The researcher argues that this is due to the non-prescriptive nature of the genre and lack of determining text. This finding is hopeful for wordless picturebooks as a means to overcome translation issues, and for the genre to be used by people from different backgrounds, regardless of their home language. The ease of use in different languages, and the genre's ability to harness storytelling, which the literature noted was important in many lower SES communities, could be a means to address the cost of producing books in mother tongue for preschool readers. One book can be used to source multiple stories without the

need for translation[74]. The content, as suggested by the literature and the findings, is a strong consideration when proposing this possibility. Content should remain relevant to the context of the reader in order to cultivate a meaningful learning experience and positive connotations to reading. The production of wordless picturebooks as such is not an easy task, but one that needs considerable research and attention. However, this genre encouraged the children to read while giving parents a sense of confidence in their children's learning abilities.

The ability of the genre to address two separate issues – that of enjoyment and love of reading, and that of education – is a promising aspect in light of South Africa's reading issues. Subsequently, it could be a valuable genre to integrate into programmes that promote reading as an enjoyable activity, as well as programmes that are more focused on literacy development. Currently, it is unclear how many of the reading and literacy programmes discussed in the study make use of wordless picturebooks, but it appears that the emphasis remains on reading in mother tongue using text, and the value of wordless picturebooks remains overlooked. Additionally, the medium's ability to develop important pre-reading skills, through aspects such as language skills, concepts of print and motor skills, could be valuable for literacy programmes.

The home as an integral space for developing a love of reading was a strong theme that emerged in this study. This was noted by the increased frequency of reading, largely due to availability of books. This finding, as well as studies discussed in the literature (Nassimbeni &Desmond, 2011; Cooper et al., 2013) highlights the potential that similar reading programmes could have in addressing the lack of reading culture, provided participants have access to appropriate books in their homes.

These findings can be further emphasised by focusing on parents' use of books. It can be postulated that the spacial separation of parents and children due to previous socio-economic circumstances, such as Apartheid laws or internal migration for employment, have affected the unity of the family. This could in turn have an effect on the ability of today's parents to engage their children in reading or to participate in reading initiatives, as they themselves were never exposed to early childhood reading. As a consequence, parents may be at a disadvantage in programmes such as the one in this study, as they lack the confidence to read. If implemented carefully, programmes such as the one used in this study can serve to readdress the uncertainty of parents' reading capabilities created by a lack of reading experiences in their early childhood. Just as children need a safe, non-judgmental space to explore and cultivate oral language and practise speaking, the transition of programmes into participant homes can create that same sense of safety for a parent to explore reading without the

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[74] It is acknowledged that the title may need to be translated along with the publishers paratext. This can, however, be limited to the cover of the book.

judgments that they may be afraid of experiencing in other settings. Parents play a crucial role in making stories enjoyable for children in their earliest years, and subsequently need to be supported in their own enjoyment of reading and storytelling. Wordless picturebooks can also help an illiterate parent to read at home with their child, without the need for assistance form a teacher or facilitator; this can be very empowering for the parent who may previously not have been able to read books with text.

The government has started addressing the need for early childhood reading with the implementation of Grade R into foundation phase schooling. Yet, the emphasis remains on the educational value of books. This is understandable, given the broader context of this crisis in terms of South African children's struggle with basic literacy acquisition (Spaul et al., 2016), but may not be effective in encouraging parents to read at home with their children, as the responsibility remains in the education sector, rather than on the parent as the first educator. In light of this, the study also identified the importance of access to books in participants' homes. South Africa's socio-economic context makes the acquisition of reading material nearly impossible for families in under-resourced areas. Further, the current state of South African school libraries paints a grim picture for families' access to reading material. Intervention programmes thus need pay specific attention to access of books in the home, rather than only at libraries or schools. Through initiatives that pinpoint under-resourced areas and make use of contact points, such as ECD centres, preschools or day care centres, families can have access to books that they can take home. Parents need to be supported to read at home through easy access to appropriate reading materials and parents need to understand their responsibility as reading role models for their children.

As a means to get books into homes, The National Department of Education and early childhood developmental services, such as those provided by the Department of Social Development and The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), could join forces to make provision for literature for children and parents to read at home a viable option. Funding for reading programmes such as the one used in the study, can be sought from corporate companies as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility initiates. The Atterbury Group or First National Bank, for example are corporate with a strong focus on reading or education programmes. Funding initiatives, such as The DG Murray Trust, can also be approached.

Book creation programmes that involve communities – as was attempted in this study – can be a powerful means to engage with people about the benefits of reading, while simultaneously allowing for people to share their own stories and to be heard. The study indicated that participants experienced a sense of mastery on receiving their wordless picturebooks. Workshops can be viewed as communities of practice, in which unintentional learning can take place through social practices,

rather than a focus on individual acquisition of skills (UNESCO 2006: 151-152). These workshops can become a means to cultivate creative thinking in both adults and children, as they work together to create a narrative. As a learner-centred programme, the needs of individuals can be met, in which their current competencies and their context can be taken into consideration and used as the foundation for workshops. A continuation of programmes such as this can assist in building a library of books for the ECD, crèche or day -care centre that hosts the programme, and encourage parents and children to continue reading and tell stories at home. It can be postulated that works such as these could potentially help to create literate environments within the community, and literate societies that are viewed as a means to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development. Some welfare organisations have concrete benefits for parents to be involved in parenting programmes, such as the provision of basic household necessities. Benefits such as these could be extended to a reading programme, in which parents are encouraged to take books home to read, ensuring that the books are returned for others to use through the provision of a concrete benefit.

University modules focusing on the development of culturally appropriate and relevant reading material in the South African context could also go a long way in making more resources available. The academic study of children's literature in the country is still largely unexplored, compared to developed countries, which have long realised the importance of reading for pleasure and the creation of materials that children can easily use. In these contexts too, wordless picturebooks are extensively researched in their ability to be used by children from different backgrounds. A collaborative and holistic approach to children's literature locally could be a means to address literacy-related issues with which South Africa is confronted; for example, collaborative studies between visual arts and social work, or visual arts and linguistics.

7.4   CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD OF RESEARCH

This study sought to contribute to the study of wordless picturebooks as a genre and their potential use within the South African context. Few academic studies have dealt with the genre's potential to address the multilingual context of South Africa, or its use in parent-child reading locally[75]. Further, the majority of research regarding the value of shared book reading, using any genre, has been conducted in the developed world (Cooper et al., 2013: 143), rather than in the contexts which face the social and economic challenges that South African families do. The main contribution of this

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[75] The only study that was found was the researcher's (2012) masters paper.

research is then to bring a genre that is widely overlooked in the South African context into an academic space, which may allow for further research on the topic to be merited.

The research findings could contribute to the wider research of children's literature in the South African context, and to a more holistic approach identified in the conceptual implications; for example, not only being relevant from a visual arts perspective, but providing primary data on the use of books in the home or the literacy development of children in under resourced areas. A further contribution can also be seen in the development of a pilot programme that serves to empower parents in reading at home through a medium that allows them to use a language of their choice, without being prescribed a story.

The study provides information on parents' perceptions of reading in the home, whereas studies on reading, or joint reading, generally focus on the children's reaction to a genre (Arizpe 2014: 107). The use of the genre in participants' homes, as opposed to a controlled setting or a reading club, intervention or training programme, also gives insight into problems that may be experienced by parents with low literacy levels; for example, they themselves do not have pre-reading skills necessary to navigate a book with their child. An emphasis on parents' understanding and perceptions of reading at home is critical, as literature reveals that if parents are not involved in the development of pre-literacy skills with their children, the children are at an increased risk for failure in their first years of school.

Lastly, the research has indicated that wordless picturebooks can be effectively used in communities in which the mother tongue differs, providing insight into a way to combat the lack of availability of books in mother tongues before and after foundation phase.

7.5   FURTHER RESEARCH AND CRITIQUE OF THE RESEARCH

A critique on the research would focus mostly on the creation of participant-authored books. A reflection of the programme indicates that participants would have benefitted from a number of storytelling and story collection workshops, rather than being expected to co-create a story after only a brief introduction and one read-aloud. Future workshops that aim to collect stories to create books for communities could be conducted over a longer period of time, to allow participants to gain confidence and become familiar with narrative conventions, and also to learn how to co-create a story with their children. It is suggested, however, that a more effective model for story collection be found. It could be argued that the hierarchy of researcher and participant negatively impacted the willingness of participants to share stories that are important to them. One way of avoiding this is to enlist the

assistance of facilitators such as Nal'iBali, without the presence of the researcher. Alternatively, participants can be asked to draw on stories from their history – stories that their grandparents or parents may have shared with them while they were growing up. This could potentially serve as a means to bring back pride in participants' own heritage and to collect stories that are relevant to their specific culture, rather than the general stories that arose from the research. More emphasis on creating a "multimodal ensemble" (Serafini, 2010: 3) could also be used in future workshops; namely, emphasis needs to be more strongly placed on the multimodality of stories through the use of materials such as painting, illustration, song, dance and gesture, rather than only visual and written modes.

The research was conducted in low socio-economic areas in only one province in South Africa. Subsequent studies should include other areas in the country as a means to gather data from a larger variety of cultures and backgrounds. As reading takes place within contexts and social relations and differences in those contexts and relations will alter the practise (Burbules 1998: 102, in Hassett & Curwood, 2009: 270–271), more diverse socio-economic and socio-cultural samples should also be considered for future research.

The research area of this study was very broad and included theories from a number of different social sciences, including linguistics, early childhood development and literacy education. It can be postulated that due to the exploratory nature of the research and a lack of literature on wordless picturebooks in the South African context, a broad overview for an initial study was necessary. However, the scope of the research meant that certain theories could not be dealt with in depth. Had the researcher decided to narrow the field to more specific theories, rich information pertaining to a narrower focus might have been gained – this is recommended for future research on the topic of wordless picturebooks in parent-child reading.

Participant retention was also an issue that was highlighted by the research and highlights areas that can be improved on in future programmes. Family buy-in is an important aspect of participant attendance in parenting programmes (Wessels et al., 2016). Future research could then introduce the programme to the whole family, rather than just the sampled participants. Sponsorships can also be sought to help with the costs of attending programmes – such as transport or care for other children or dependents. The low participant retention rate meant that the sample was small and consequently, large-scale samples will be required for future research. The small sample also makes findings difficult to generalise to the larger population.

The findings indicate that further research is needed into the use of the genre in participants' homes, specifically with regard to the methods that are employed in reading, and regarding the narratives

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that are produced by communities. As previously mentioned, the research did not view extensive questioning as being appropriate for this study, but information on the types of stories that participants told could provide insight into what types of content can be created for local audiences.

A larger scale research investigating the implementation of wordless picturebooks into current interventions could provide more insight on how the genre can be used to compliment reading materials currently used by NGOs and other pro-literacy organisations.

Lastly, as per the specifications of particitative action research, the researcher is in contact with management and participants from all research sites in an effort to establish a way forward for the reading and book creation programme. Once decided upon, the implementation, maintenance and feedback on these projects could be documented in an effort to further refine the introduction of wordless picturebooks and other genres[76], into participants' homes. Also, themes and narratives that emerge from books created by parents and their children at the centre could be documented.

7.6   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The investigation of this research aimed to explore participant perceptions of wordless picturebooks, as used in a participatory programme in which children, parents/primary-caregivers and the researcher participated. The results indicate that the books were an effective means of encouraging a culture of reading in the home and for parents to contribute to their children's enjoyment of reading through the creation of stories using only pictures. Due to their non-prescriptive nature, the books proved to be a genre that could be used in a variety of languages and by participants in different communities. In this light, these picturebooks can be regarded as particularly relevant to the South African context. This study contributed to the field of children's literature and the study of wordless picturebooks as a genre in the South African context and, based on the finding, the researcher believes the genre merits further investigation. The findings indicated that access to these books in the home allowed for both parents and children to engage in reading activities that they enjoyed, individually or in a joint reading practice. It follows that wordless picturebooks, and the affordances of the genre, should be considered more seriously; firstly as a literary genre in South Africa, and secondly, as a means of intervention in South Africa's reading crisis.

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[76] Due to the lack of locally produced wordless picturebooks, it is assumed that other appropriate books will need to be introduced into a book sharing programme.

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APPENDIX A: Figures
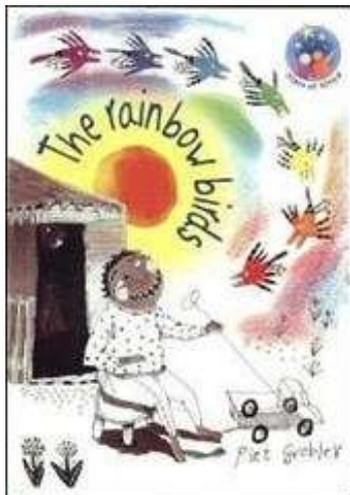
Figure 3.1: (above) Cover illustration of Piet Grobler, *The Rainbow Birds*, 2001 (Grobler 2001).

Figure 3.2: (above)Illustration from Suzy Lee, *Shadows*, 2010 (Lee, 2015).
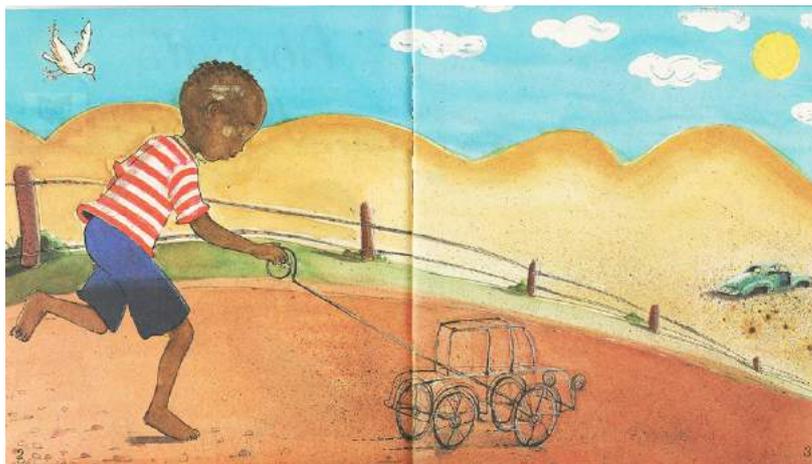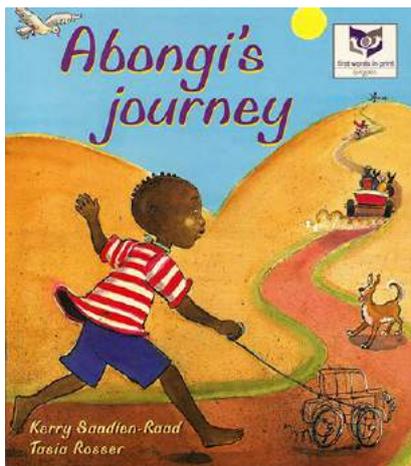
Figure 3.3: Cover illustration and inside page of Tasia Rosser in Kerry Saadien-Raad, *Abongi's journey*, 2004 (Sadien-Raad & Rosser 2004:2-3).
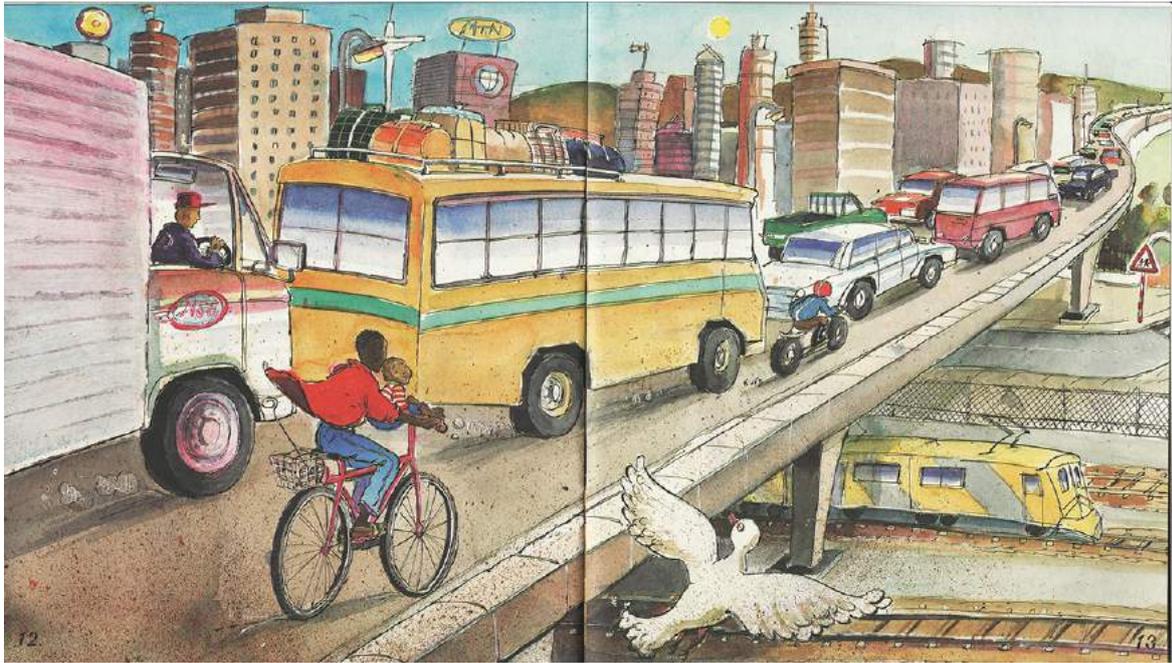
Figure 3.4: The MTN sign visible in a page of Tasia Rosser in Kerry Saadien-Raad, *Abongi's journey*, 2004 (Sadien-Raad & Rosser 2004:2-3).
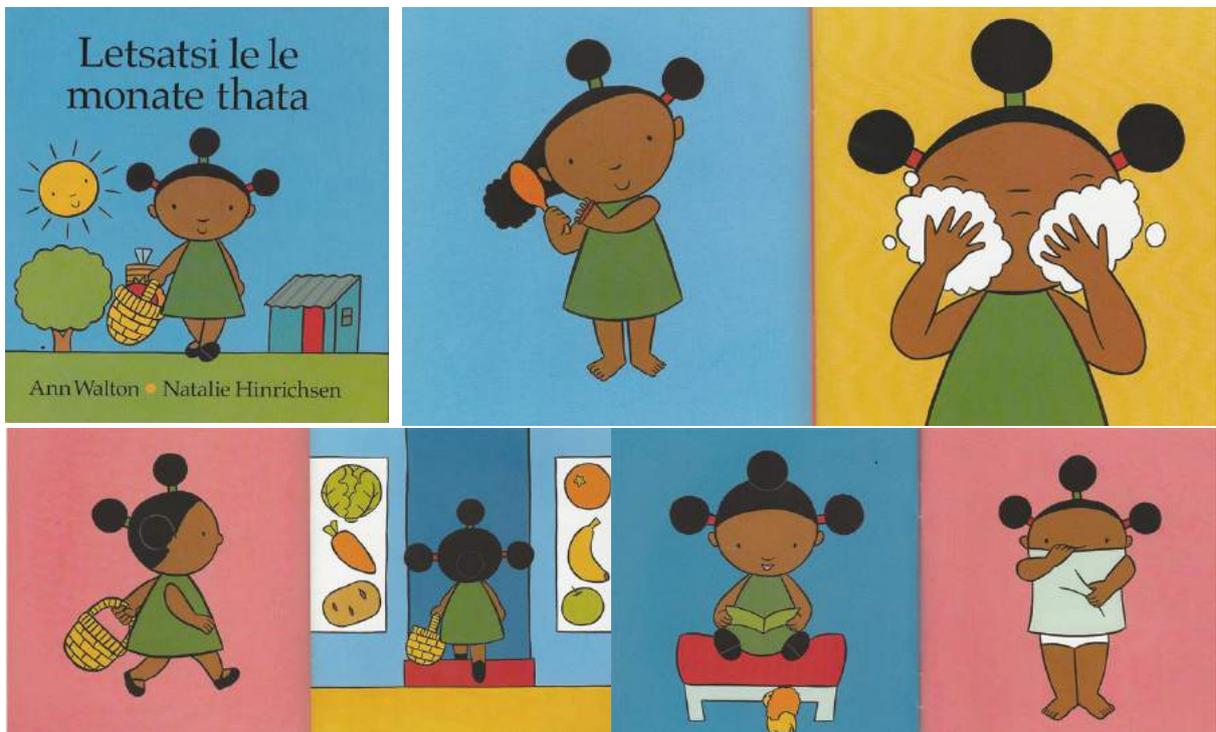
Figure 3.5: Cover illustration and inside pages of Natalie Hinrichsen and Anne Walton, *A very nice day/Letsatsi lele monate thata*, 2006. Collection (Walton & Hinrichsen, 2006:3-4;9-10;19-20).
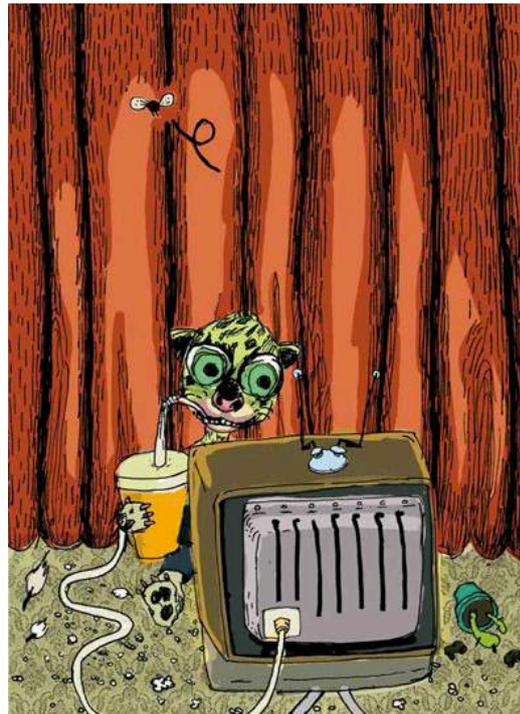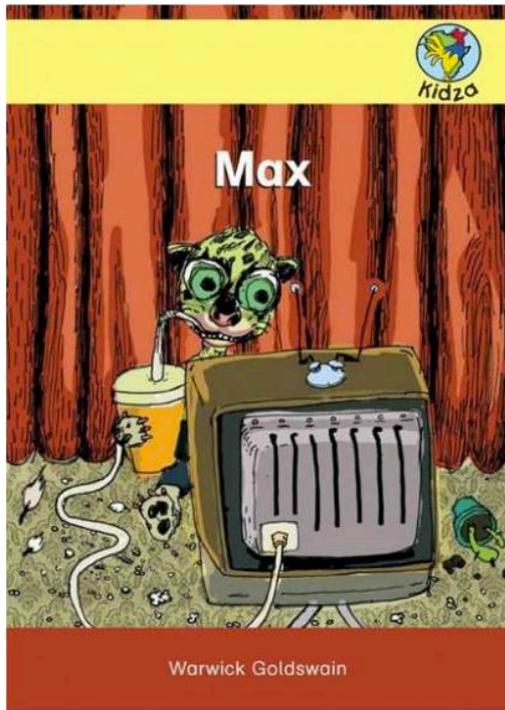
Figure 3.6: Cover illustration and inside page of Warwick Goldswain, *Max*, 2010 (Goldswain, 2010:4).
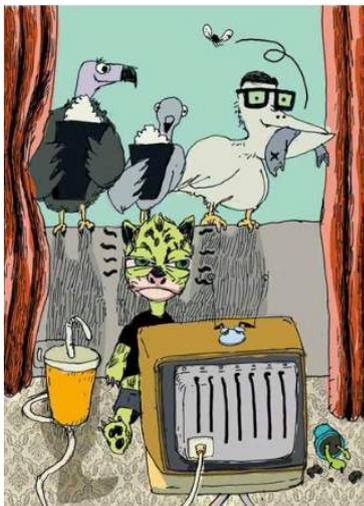
Figure 3.7: (above) Max with the birds, inside illustration of Warwick Goldswain, *Max*, 2010 (Goldswain, 2010:2).
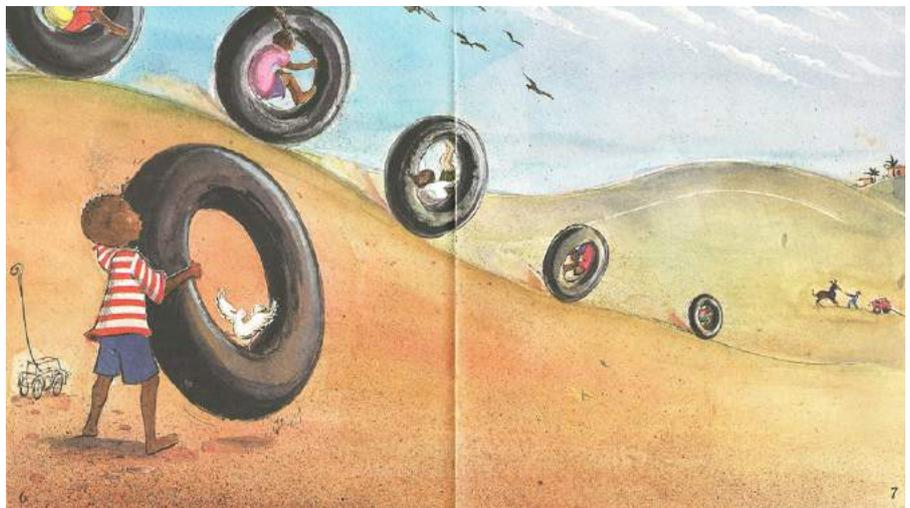
Figure 3.8: (above) *Vectors as used in* Tasia Rosser in Kerry Saadien-Raad, *Abongi's Journey* (2004:6-7).
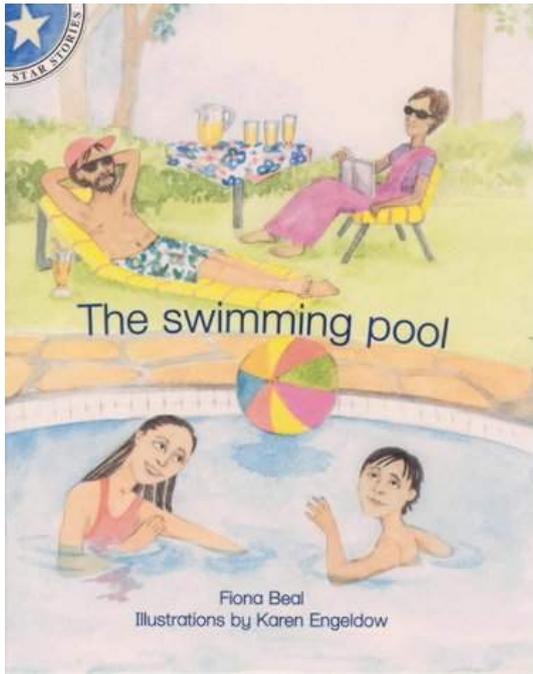
Figure 4.1: (above) Cover page of Karen Engeldow in Fiona Beal, *The Swimming Pool*, 2002 (Beal & Engeldow, 2002).
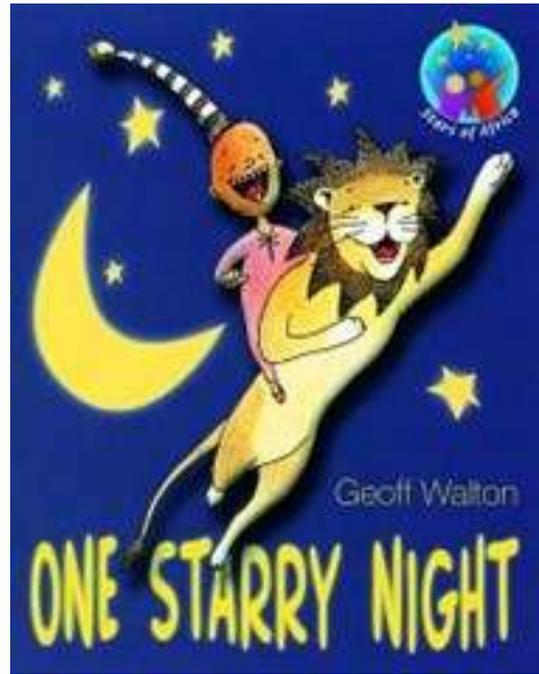

Figure 4.2: (above) Cover illustration of Geoff Walton, *One Starry Night*, 2005 (Walton, 2005).

Figure 4.3: Cover illustration and inside page of Diek Grobler, *1,2,3*, 2001 (Grobler, 2001:15-16).
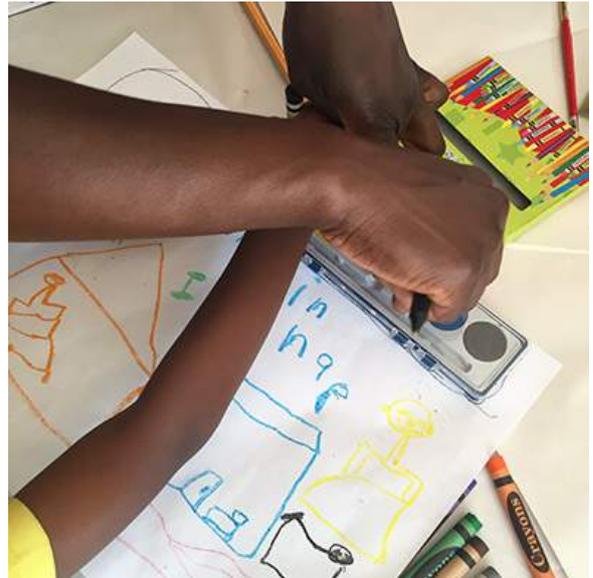
Figure 7.1: Workshop in progress at Shoshanguve.


Figure 7.2: Original drawings from workshops

Figure 7.3: Original drawing from workshop created by parent and child

There a car and people. The People are in the car. The people are going to school. There's was also a person who was stopping the car. On the way we So people going to school, and the others going to work. We arive to school at 4.730 We preiy and go to class And we go home bay bus. And there is a hows.

THIS IS ME AND MY DOUGHTER AND SHE LIKES HER SELF AND ALSO LIKE TREES AND OCEAN. SHE SAID I MUS DRAWN MY SELF WEARING DRESS. AND S SAID I MUST DRAW A BOOK AFTER SHE SA I DID NOT DRAW A BEAUTIFUL BOOK.

Second picture (2)
SHE SAID I MUST DRAW A PLACE WE AND A BROOM. AND SHE LIKES SCHOOL. SHE ALSO LIKE MRS SOMB TEACHER SAT THE SENTER. SHE B SHOES. THE HOUSE WE BUY WE A TEACHE TO STAY WITH

Figure 7.4: Original stories from workshop created by parent and child

Figure 7.5: Pages from participant authored book, *The Princess and the Frog*, 2016 (Le Roux, 2016).
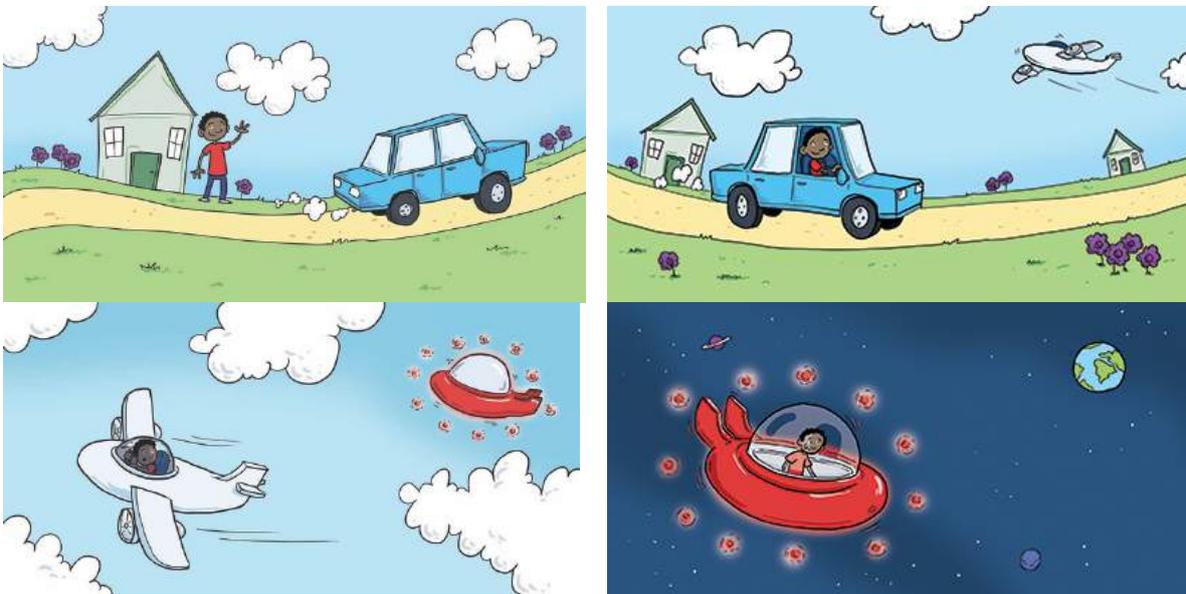
Figure 7.6: Pages from participant authored book, *Going Places*, 2016 (Wallace, 2016).

Figure 7.7: Pages from participant authored book, *Paballo and the Sun*, 2016 (Le Roux, 2016).

Figure 7.8: Pages from participant authored book, *Kamagelo's Friends*, 2016 (Le Roux, 2016).
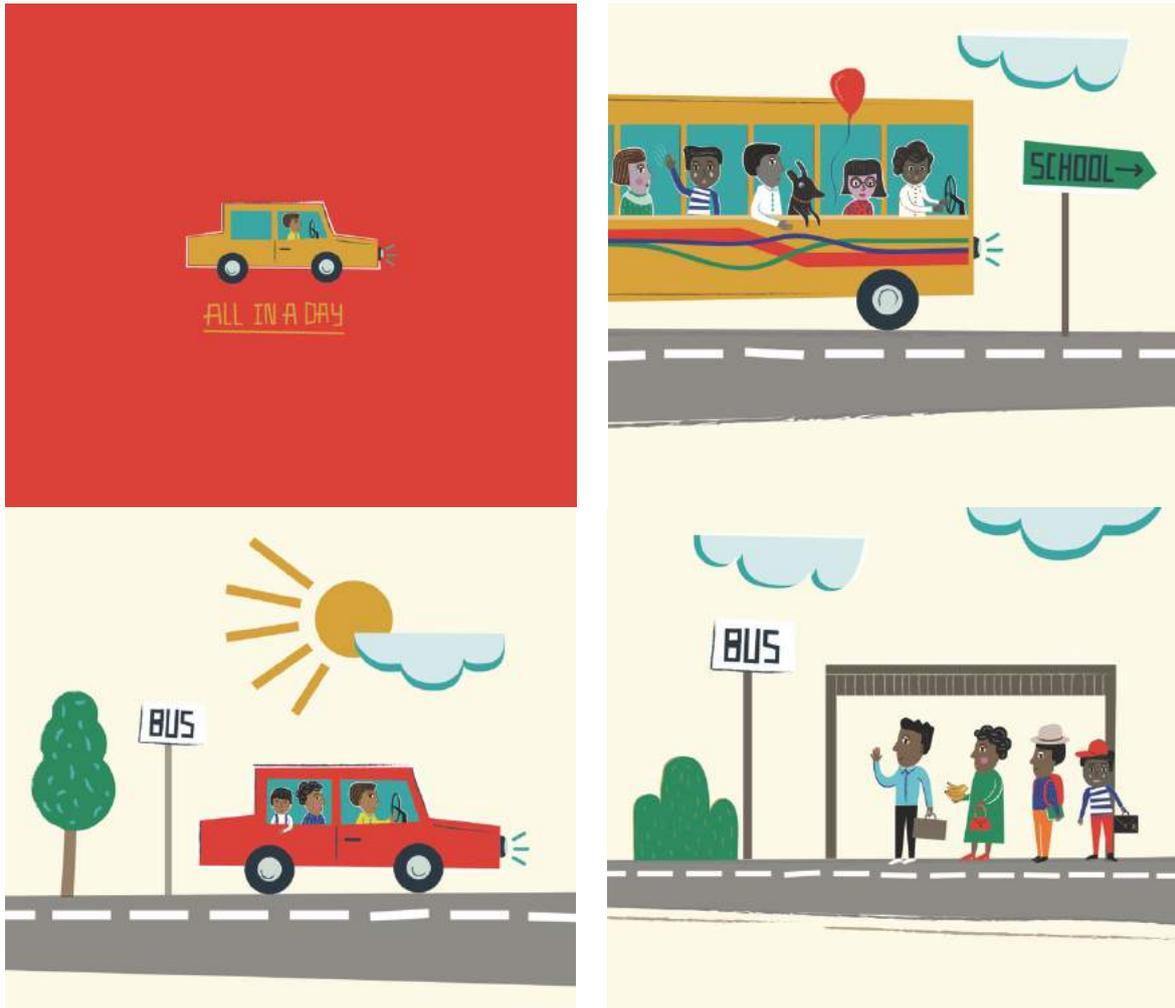
Figure 7.9: Pages from participant authored book, *All in a Day*, 2016 (Bakker, 2016).

Figure 7.10: Pages from participant authored book, *Mahau and Gontse*, 2016 (Le Roux, 2016).

Figure 7.11 (above): Pages from participant authored book, *The Creche*, 2016 (Van der Walt, 2016).

Figure 7.12 (above): Pages from participant authored book, *Thulani's Party*, 2016 (Le Roux, 2016).

Figure 7.13 (above): Pages from participant authored book, *The Baby*, 2016 (Le Roux, 2016).

Figure 7.14: Pages from participant authored book, *Mom and Me*, 2016 (Le Roux, 2016).
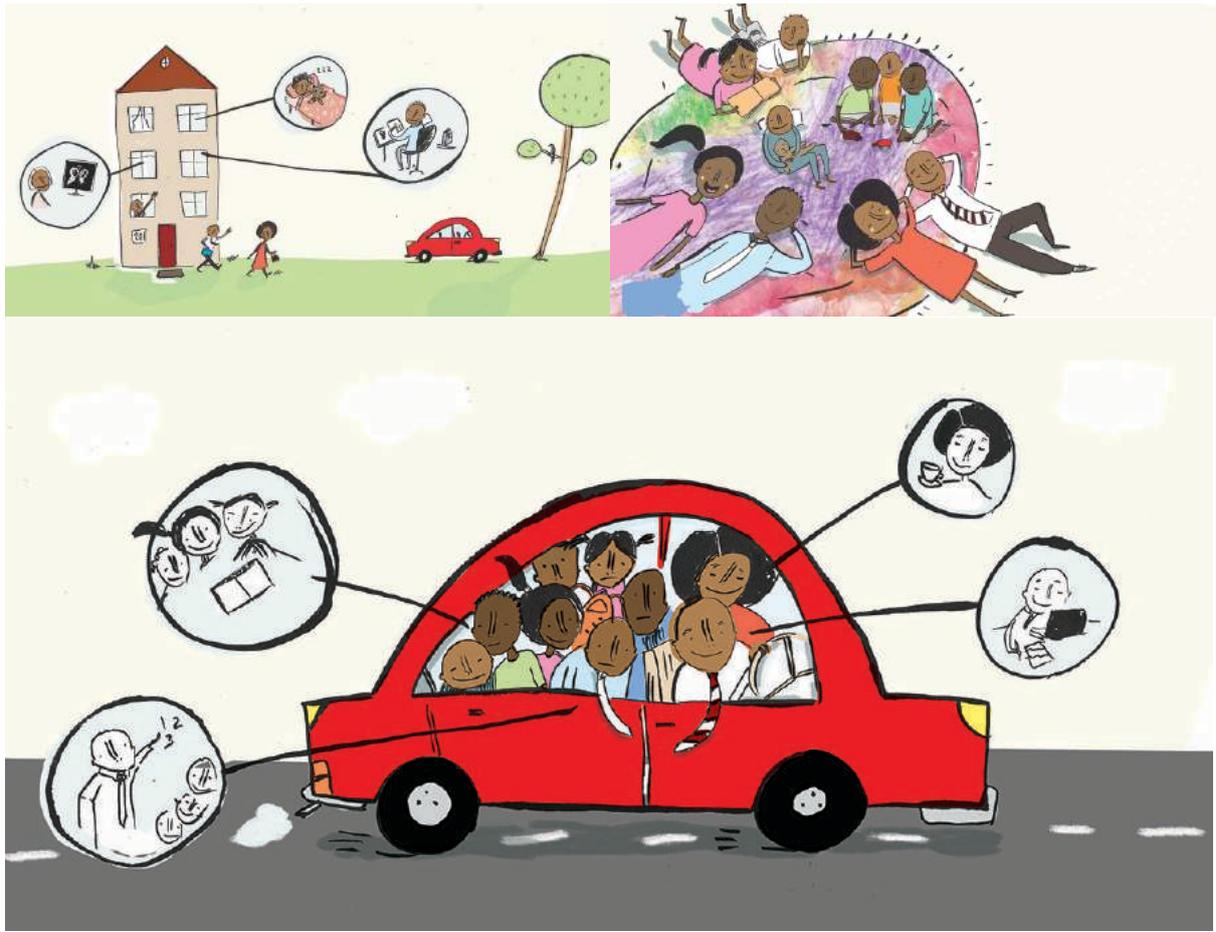
Figure 7.15: Pages from participant authored book, *The Busy House*, 2016 (Le Roux, 2016).

Figure 7.16: Examples of participant drawings included in the books, 2016 (Le Roux, 2016).

APPENDIX B: Permission to conduct Research; The Funanani Trust

12 November 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madame,

This letter is to certify that Funanani Trust give full consent to ***Adrie le Roux*** to conduct her Doctorate research study within the organisation environment and our beneficiaries. The Board of Funanani Trust fully support the   study and eagerly awaits the outcomes of the research. We will accordingly evaluate our programmes, after the outcome of the research.

Should you need any more clarification, please feel free to contact me.

Kind regards,

_____
ELMIEN CLAASSENS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

APPENDIX C: Permission to conduct Research; NEA Foundation

NEA Foundation
Represented by:
Lelanie Steyn – 071 603 1915
Marlie van Vuuren – 082 777 9401
092-238-NPO
930041004- PBO
E-Mail: hello@neafoundation.co.za
www.neafoundation.co.za
www.facebook.com/NEA.Foundation

<u>Letter of permission RE: Research project</u>

With this letter NEA Foundation give permission for Adrie Le Roux
To do her research project at Happy Sabby Pre-school in Pretoria West.

The research will be done during: 3rd March - 5th May 2016

If there are any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind Regards
Marlie van Vuuren
0827779401

APPENDIX D: Informed Consent Form

    a) Informed consent form used at research sites 1 and 2

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Wordless Picture Books: An exploration of their potential to encourage parent-child reading in the South African context

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Adrie le Roux, a PhD student from the Department of Visual Arts at Stellenbosch University.

    1. Parents

    You, as the parent of a child between the age of 3 and 6 years old, enrolled at _____ crèche, have been selected as a possible participant in this study

    2. Primary Caregivers

    You, as the primary caregiver of a child between the age of 3 and 6 years old, enrolled at _____ crèche have been selected as a possible participant in this study

Both you and your child will be asked to take part in the study. The results of this study will be reported in a PhD Thesis.

    1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore if wordless picture books, or picture storybooks, can help to develop a culture of and love for reading in the home, if they are used for reading between parents/primary caregivers and their children. The study is conducted within the South African context, and approached from my viewpoint as an illustrator.

    2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things. Both you and your child will be asked to participate in each part of this study. Below is an outline of what will happen at each session:
- One (1) Focus Group Interview
- One (1) Story collection and book creation workshop
- Three (3) interviews
- Final Group Discussion

    a) Focus Group Interview (30 minutes – 1 hour):
    You and your child will be asked to come to in a group reading session at the crèche. This will take about 1 hour.

      i.   At the reading session, you will be introduced to wordless picture books (storybooks), and asked to spend some time reading with your child.

     ii.   You will then be invited to take a few picture books home with you, and asked to spend some time reading these at home, with your child. You can do this whenever you have some time.

b) Story collection and book creation workshop (2 hours)

You and your child will be invited to a story collection and book creation workshop. This workshop will last about 2 hours and will include the following:

      i.   You and your child will be asked to tell a story. We would like to collect stories that you believe are entertaining, and that are relevant to your community.

     ii.   The researcher will ask your permission to document the story, so that she can create a book out of it.

    iii.   The researcher will ask you if you would like to illustrate the story yourself. If you do, she will provide you with materials to do so, and then ask for your permission to use your illustrations for a book. You will be given a copy of this book, and full credit will be given to you and your child as the author of the book.

    iv.   If you do not want to create the illustrations for the book, the researcher will ask your permission to illustrate the story that you have told her. Full credit will be given to you and your child as the authors of the story.

     v.   You may also remain anonymous if you do not want your name to be printed in the book.

    vi.   The researcher will arrange for your book to be printed and you will be given a copy at when they are printed.

c) Interviews (30 minutes), every two (2) weeks:

You and your child will be asked to participate in a follow up session every (2) weeks after the first session.

      i.   At the second session, you and your child will be asked to talk about what you thought about reading the picture storybooks at home. The other people who are taking part in the study will also be in the discussion if you want them to be. If needed, a translator will also be there. The researcher will ask you about what you thought of the use of the picture books and the storytelling with your child, ask what you thought about reading them at home. These interviews will take about 20 minutes

     ii.   You will be asked to take more picture books home with you, and again be asked to spend some time reading these at home, with your child.

d) Final group discussion

      i.   You and your child will be asked to come to a final group discussion where you will be asked to talk about reading the picture storybooks created by the project with the rest of the people taking part in the study. This will take about 30 minutes to an hour.

3.   POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The project is designed to avoid any risk or discomfort to you and your child.

4.   POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participants will not benefit directly form the research.
The books created during the story collection workshop will be given to the crèche library.
The research might help other families read at home in the future.

5.   PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not receive payment or gifts for participating in the study.

6.   CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.
You can ask to look at the notes or listen to your voice recordings at any stage. If you want to edit any of this information you will be allowed to.

Your confidentiality will be protected by keeping all written notes and voice recordings safe in a locked cupboard in my house. I am the only person who has access to the keys for the cupboard. I will also not use you or your child's names in the study, to protect your identity. **You also do not have to put your names on the storybooks that you and your child will make during the study.**

If a translator is used, he/she will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. He/she will also be given instructions to always fully translate what you have said, and to not leave out any information.

Results will be reported in a PhD Thesis at the University of Stellenbosch. A summary of the results will be made given to the management of the crèche, in order for them to see if they want to continue with the programme. If you are interested, you will be told about the findings of the research.

If you contribute to the research, you will be given information of how the research will be done. You are free to stop taking part in the research or reading sessions without any negative consequences, or any effect on you or your child's relationships with the researcher or anyone at the crèche.

7.   PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You and your child can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you and your child volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8.   IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher, Adrie le Roux, at adrie.leroux@gmail.com or you can phone on 0824966122, or
The Research supervisor: Elmarie Costandius, elmarie@sun.ac.za, 021 8083053.

9.   RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [*me/the subject/the participant*] by [*name of relevant person]* in [*Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/other*] and [*I am/the subject is/the participant is*] in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*]. [*I/the participant/the subject*] was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *[my/his/her]* satisfaction.

[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.] I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Subject/Participant

_____

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____   _____

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative   Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant]* and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative].* *[H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into* _____ by _____].

_____   _____

1.1. Signature of Investigator   Date

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b)   Informed consent used at research site 3.

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Wordless Picture Books: An exploration of their potential to encourage parent-child reading in the South African context

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Adrie le Roux, a PhD student from the Department of Visual Arts at Stellenbosch University.

1.Parents
You, as the parent of a child between the age of 4 and 6 years old, enrolled at _____ crèche, have been selected as a possible participant in this study

2. Primary Caregivers
You, as the primary caregiver of a child between the age of 4 and 6 years old, enrolled at _____ crèche have been selected as a possible participant in this study

Both you and your child will be asked to take part in the study. The results of this study will be reported in a PhD Thesis.

1.   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore if wordless picture books, or picture storybooks, can help to develop a culture of and love for reading in the home, if they are used for reading between parents/primary caregivers and their children. The study is conducted within the South African context, and approached from my viewpoint as an illustrator.

2.   PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Give some of your time to take part in a research project that will consist of:
- One (1) introduction session
- Three (3) interviews
- One (1) exit interview

Both you and your child will be asked to participate in each part of this study. Below is an outline of what will happen at each session:

a)   **Reading session 1 (1 hour):**
     You and your child will be asked to come to in a group reading session at the crèche. This will take about 1 hour.
- At the reading session, you will be introduced to wordless picture books (storybooks), and asked to spend some time reading with your child.

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- You will then be invited to take a few picture books home with you, and asked to spend some time reading these at home, with your child. You can do this whenever you have some time.

b) Interviews

- Every two weeks, over the period of 7 weeks, you and your child will be asked to come to the crèche for an interview. I would like to ask your opinion on the picture books that you have been reading at home.
- You will be given new books at each interview to take home with you to read.

3.   POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The project is designed to avoid any risk or discomfort to you and your child.

4.   POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participants will not benefit directly form the research.
The books used during the story collection workshop will be given to the crèche library.
The research might help other families read at home in the future.

5.   PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not receive payment or gifts for participating in the study.

6.   CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.
You can ask to look at the notes or listen to your voice recordings at any stage. If you want to edit any of this information you will be allowed to.

Your confidentiality will be protected by keeping all written notes and voice recordings safe in a locked cupboard in my house. I am the only person who has access to the keys for the cupboard. I will also not use you or your child's names in the study, to protect your identity. You also do not have to put your names on the storybooks that you and your child will make during the study.

If a translator is used, he/she will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. He/she will also be given instructions to always fully translate what you have said, and to not leave out any information.

Results will be reported in a PhD Thesis at the University of Stellenbosch. A summary of the results will be made given to the management of the crèche, in order for them to see if they want to continue with the programme. If you are interested, you will be told about the findings of the research.

If you contribute to the research, you will be given information of how the research will be done. You are free to stop taking part in the research or reading sessions without any negative consequences, or any effect on you or your child's relationships with the researcher or anyone at the crèche.

7.   PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You and your child can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you and your child volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8.   IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher, Adrie le Roux, at adrie.leroux@gmail.com or you can phone on 0824966122, or

The Research supervisor: Elmarie Costandius, elmarie@sun.ac.za, 021 8083053.

9.   RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [*me/the subject/the participant*] by [*name of relevant person]* in [*Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/other]* and [*I am/the subject is/the participant is]* in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*]. [*I/the participant/the subject]* was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *[my/his/her]* satisfaction.

[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study]. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Subject/Participant

_____

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____   _____

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative   **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant]* and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative]. [H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into* _____ by _____].

_____   _____

1.2. Signature of Investigator   **Date**

APPENDIX E: Assent Form

	STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM
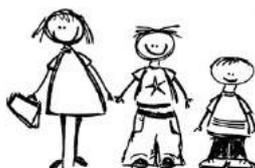
TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: *Using picture books to read with my family.*

RESEARCHERS NAME(S): Adrie le Roux
ADDRESS: 44 Maldon Manor, Beagle Street, Garsfontein
CONTACT NUMBER: 082 496 6122

What is RESEARCH?

Research is something we do to find **NEW KNOWLEDGE** about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about children and teenagers and the things that affect their lives, their schools, their families and their health. We do this to try and make the world a better place!

What is this research project all about?

This research wants to find out how you and your parent feel about spending time together looking at picture books.

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?

You are between the age of 4 and 6, and are in the crèche that we are going to do the study at. I would like to know how you feel about the books and stories that I am going to use for our study.

Who is doing the research?

My name is Adrie le Roux. I am studying at the University of Stellenbosch, and I am doing this research to find out how I can make pictures for books that you and your parent can use, and tell stories about.

What will happen to me in this study?
You will come to the crèche with your parent / caretaker a few times, where you will read books and also be given books to take home to read. When you come back to the crèche, I will ask you and your parent some questions about the books and what stories you told. These questions are not a test; I just want to find out what you think. You will also be asked if you and your parent / caretaker would like to make your own picture books. If you do, you can choose how you want to do this. Your book will be printed for you, and you will get a copy of it to keep.

Can anything bad happen to me?
Nothing bad will happen to you. This is meant to be fun. If you want to stop taking part in the research at any time, you can. You can tell your parent or me whenever you want to stop. No one will be mad at you, and you won't be in any trouble if you do.

Can anything good happen to me?
We want you to have fun.

Will anyone know I am in the study?
No one except me, your parent/caretaker, the staff at the creche and the other parents and children in the study will know that you are in the study. I will not use your name or your family's name in my paper, and will keep any information that you do not want shared safe.

Who can I talk to about the study? You can talk to me, Adrie. My telephone number is 082 496 6122. You can also talk to Dr. Elmarie Costandius. Her telephone number is 021 808 3053. You can talk to us any time if you want to know more about the study.

What if I do not want to do this?
You can choose to take part or not to take part in the study. You can tell us or your parent if you don't want to take part. You can stop being in the study at anytime, without getting into trouble.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

YES	NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES	NO

Do you understand that you can STOP being in the study at any time?

YES	NO

_____   _____

Signature of Child   Date

APPENDIX F: Participant created picturebook release form

![logo]	*STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY*

PICTUREBOOK RELEASE FORM

I grant the Adrie le Roux and The Funanani Trust permission to use my story (illustrated and printed in book format), in their library, and also to promote parent involvement in their school, without payment or other consideration. I understand and agree my name and surname, and my child's name and surname, will appear on the book cover and/or on the inside cover, and that it may be used as part of this research at another site. It will not be published or used for any other purpose without my written permission.

_____
Name

_____
Signature

_____
Date

APPENDIX G: Focus group interview schedule

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW (Research Site 1, 2 and 3) To establish reading history and routine	
Person/s interviewed	
Date	
Place	
Duration	
PURPOSE OF RESEARCH	
To explore the use of economically viable *wordless* picture books as an intervention to facilitate joint reading between children and parents / primary care-givers of low literacy.	
PURPOSE OF THIS INTERVIEW	
Obtain perceptions of parents / primary care-givers and their children who participated in the research after they have spent time reading these books with their children in their own home environment.	
ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY	
All the participants in the research will be fully briefed and their participation will be voluntary. I will not use the names of the participants to keep their identities confidential. The information from the participants will be kept confidential and any personal information will not be shared with other participants.	
INTERVIEW CONTENT	

Introduction

- Introduce translator if one is needed
- Explain objectives of the focus group and what topic areas will be addressed
- Explanation the potential value of the research as to how the information will be used for the benefit of the specific organisation and communities
- Give an indication of the expected length of the interview
- Set ground rules or guidelines:
    - No right or wrong answers, only differing points of view
    - We're tape recording, one person speaking at a time
    - We're on a first name basis
    - You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views
    - Rules for cellular phones: we ask that your turn off your phones or pagers. If you cannot and if you must respond to a call, please do so as quietly as possible and re-join us as quickly as you can.
    - My role as moderator will be to guide the discussion
    - Talk to each other

List of topics regarding project

- Did you you read with your parents when you were growing up?

- Do you currently read at home?

- Do you read with your three to six-year old child at home?

- What makes reading at home difficult for you?

- What kind of reading materials do you have at home?

Closing

- Summarise the main issues discussed

- Discuss the next course of action

- Encourage participants to reflect on what they have said and to contact the researcher if they want to edit any of their comments made during the interviews.

- Thank the participant for his or her time

APPENDIX H: Semi structured interview schedules

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE:	
Interview to be conducted bi-weekly during reading programme **(Research sites 1, 2 and 3)**	
Person/s interviewed	
Date	
Place	
Duration	
PURPOSE OF RESEARCH	
To explore the use of economically viable *wordless* picture books as an intervention to facilitate joint reading between children and parents / primary care-givers of low literacy.	
PURPOSE OF THIS INTERVIEW	
Obtain perceptions of individual parents / primary care-givers and their children who participated in the research after the first phase of book reading.	
ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY	
All the participants in the research will be fully briefed and their participation will be voluntary. I will not use the names of the participants to keep their identities confidential. The information from the participants will be kept confidential and any personal information will not be shared with other participants.	
INTERVIEW CONTENT	
Introduction	
• Introduce translator if one is needed	
• Explain objectives of the interview and what topic areas will be addressed	
• Explanation the potential value of the research as to how the information will be used for the benefit of the specific organisation and communities	
• Give an indication of the expected length of the interview.	
List of topics regarding project	
• How did you find reading picture books at home?	
• Were you able to tell stories using the picture books?	
• How did you experience reading at home?	
• Which book has been your favourite so far and why?	
Closing	
• Summarise the main issues discussed	
• Discuss the next course of action	
• Encourage participants to reflect on what they have said and to contact the researcher if they want to edit any of their comments made during the interviews.	
• Thank the participant for his or her time	

FINAL INTERVIEW (UPON COMPLETION OF PROGRAM)

The final interviews and focus groups will also serve as a debriefing tool for participants. Should participants wish, it would be a possibility to put margins in place for the creation of a storytelling and book creation project at the crèche that could continue after the research has concluded. Participants can decide how best to continue with this process.

Person/s interviewed	
Date	
Place	
Duration	

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

To explore the use of economically viable *wordless* picture books as an intervention to facilitate joint reading between children and parents / primary care-givers of low literacy.

PURPOSE OF THIS INTERVIEW

Obtain perceptions of parents / primary care-givers and their children who participated in the research after the completion of the reading program.

ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All the participants in the research will be fully briefed and their participation will be voluntary. I will not use the names of the participants to keep their identities confidential. The information from the participants will be kept confidential and any personal information will not be shared with other participants.

INTERVIEW CONTENT

Introduction

- Introduce translator if one is needed
- Explain objectives of the focus group and what topic areas will be addressed
- Explanation the potential value of the research as to how the information will be used for the benefit of the specific organisation and communities
- Give an indication of the expected length of the interview
- Set ground rules or guidelines:
    - No right or wrong answers, only differing points of view
    - We're tape recording
    - We're on a first name basis
    - Rules for cellular phones: we ask that your turn off your phones or pagers. If you cannot and if you must respond to a call, please do so as quietly as possible and re-join us as quickly as you can.

List of topics regarding project

- What did you think of the program?
- What did you think about creating your own picture story books? **(Research site 1 and 2 only)**
- How did you find your own picture books to read at home? **(Research site 1 and 2 only)**
- Was your experience reading the books that you and the other participants created different from the books that you read after the first session? How? **(Research site 1 and 2 only)**

- Which books did you like reading more?

- Would you participate in a study like this again?

- Do you have any questions for me or about the study that I can answer for you now? If you prefer you can also contact me to speak to me privately.

Closing

- Summarise the main issues discussed

- Discuss the next course of action, such as possible follow up interviews, and creating opportunities for the project to continue should the community wish to do so.

- Encourage participants to reflect on what they have said and to contact the researcher if they want to edit any of their comments made during the interviews.

- Thank the participant for his or her time