



Investigation of Problems of Sesotho Oral Reading Fluency in Primary and Post-Primary Schools in Lesotho

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Abstract

The research reported on here summarizes a large study on the Investigation of Problems of Sesotho Oral Reading Fluency in Primary and Post-Primary Schools in ten districts of Lesotho. Participants were 39 teachers and 156 students from the ten districts. The findings show lack of reading skills on the part of students. On the other hand, teachers are not equipped with sufficient skills of teaching oral reading. In most cases the reading skill is neglected or not taught in schools. In conclusion the study recommends that Sesotho oral reading must be taught and examined in both primary and post-primary schools.

Keywords: oral reading fluency

BACKGROUND

The aim of the research was to investigate the problems and suggest strategies to improve Sesotho oral reading fluency in Lesotho primary and post-primary schools. Most importantly the study sought to find out if there is any Sesotho oral reading activity in schools, and to check whether there is any assessment attached to it. The research was conducted in ten districts of Lesotho in selected primary and post-primary schools, rural and lowlands schools. Teachers and students were interviewed where each group was treated in a different way from others. Teachers were asked to identify problems encountered during the Sesotho oral reading by students and to suggest possible solutions. Students were provided with a Sesotho text for oral reading where they were tested on the words read correctly, words read incorrectly, words read with staggering, skipped words and inserted words per minute. After the oral reading students were asked to raise their concerns with Sesotho oral reading and suggest possible solutions for improvements. Data analysis was done per district and later at national level where overall performance was condensed, including identified problems and possible solutions. Analysis was followed by a roadmap to constructive recommendations.

RATIONALE

The main questions of the research were the following:

- Is there any assessment of Sesotho oral reading in primary and post-primary schools?
- What are the causes and nature of Sesotho oral reading problems-in primary and post-primary schools?
- Which set of strategies could be used to improve Sesotho oral reading fluency in primary and post-primary schools?

The research is of vital importance to the teachers and students of primary and post-primary schools even to the Basotho nation as a whole.

It will enable them:

- (i) To orally read Sesotho language fluently with accuracy, appropriate rate and comprehensively.
- (ii) To pronounce Sesotho words correctly when reading.
- (iii) To observe punctuation marks and follow them when reading.
- (iv) To implement appropriate strategies of improving Sesotho oral reading fluency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) is one of the topics that some scholars have written about in their respective languages while some have defined it and proposed strategies to improve this process.

The Junior Secondary syllabus of 2002, states that teachers should encourage students to do extensive reading of texts, to do oral reading, observing punctuation marks and reading for understanding the content. The syllabus does not address the inclusion of quarterly or end of year examination of the oral reading aspect. That is, students are not assessed continuously for the Sesotho oral reading that they are encouraged to practice. (Junior Secondary Syllabus, 2002).

Additionally, Reshly et al, (2009) suggest that a student's level of verbal reading proficiency is one of the common, reliable and efficient indicators of his/her reading comprehension. What Reshly et al, (2009) suggest have ignited strong interest for the researchers to investigate the causes and nature of Sesotho oral reading problems and thereby propose strategies to improve its oral reading fluency of Sesotho.

Rasplica, C. & Cummings, K. D. (2013) and Alst, V.J. (2014) also contributed massively in defining-oral reading fluency from different dimensions. Almost all scholars hold similar sentiments this far, they indicate that oral reading fluency is the ability to read text with accuracy, appropriate rate and with good expression. The view that has been held by these scholars is one that the current research would want to grapple with in relation to Lesotho's primary and post-primary level.

More also, there are yet some scholars such as Blau, Rasplica & Cummings, (2013); Alst, (2014) & Osewalt, (2014) who have devoted their time in suggesting some strategies for improving oral reading fluency. They have proposed strategies for improving printed media, texts, newspapers etc. oral reading fluency. They set out to make an outline of

about ten strategies advanced by The National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000). Such strategies are as follows:

Guided Reading: The National Reading Panel (NRP) concluded that repeated oral reading, with the guidance of teachers, can improve the students' oral reading fluency;

Repeated Reading: Students should be given opportunities to read the same passage orally several times;

Timed Repeated Reading: Is a technique used for monitoring students' fluency development. Reading and re-reading a text under timed conditions can improve oral reading fluency of students;

Choral Reading: have students read a text aloud in unison;

Paired Reading: Teacher and student read the same text/passage aloud together.

Echo-Reading: Teacher reads aloud a line from a text and asks a student to read the same line;

Taped Assisted Reading: Make a student listens to his/her reading from a tape recorder. This strategy can improve a student's oral reading fluency;

High Frequency Sight Words: Teaching high frequency words is also helpful for improving oral reading fluency of students;

Direct and Explicit Phonics Instruction: Reading fluency depends on decoding unfamiliar words, and;

Computer- based Programmes: These programmes use repeated reading strategy with a timed component to improve fluency skills.

Spaull & Pretorius (2015) refer to Fuchus (2001) in that oral reading fluency is defined in terms of accuracy and speed in word recognition, and has been found to be a reliable indicator of reading comprehension. And further states that there is strong empirical basis attesting to a relationship between fluency and reading comprehension, as fluency is measured as total words read correctly per minute.

Oral Reading Fluency also surfaces in Baseline Report of 2015 prepared for Lesotho Literacy for Young Visually Impaired Persons by the Catholic Relief Services in Lesotho (Baseline Report:2015). The study was carried out under Early Grade Reading Assessment which is an instrument designed to assess foundational reading skills that are crucial to children's successful reading and comprehension including oral reading fluency. In this study students were assessed on the number of Sesotho words they could correctly read aloud per minute. It was observed that students had difficulty in Sesotho oral reading fluency. Although the study focused on visually impaired persons, it raises the concern for Sesotho oral reading fluency for the rest of Lesotho primary and post-primary schools which is the focus of the intended study. Some of the recommendations from the Baseline Report would be incorporated in order to improve on the Sesotho oral reading fluency among the Lesotho students at primary and post-primary schools.

With regard to Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education syllabus of 2015 there is no clear indication of assessing students' oral reading fluency of Sesotho. Under assessment, the objectives for reading in section 4 are not measurable and do not address the aspect of oral reading fluency, instead understanding of the content and expectations after silent reading. Under Paper 2: Reading, Section 1 titled 'Reading for ideas' questions are set on one passage of 600 – 700 words where students are asked to identify and note down required information. Under Section 2, 'Text analysis – reading for meaning' students answer short questions that test their ability to understand language not oral reading. To this end, it could be argued that the syllabus does not cover or examine students' oral reading fluency, (Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education Syllabus 2015). The attempt on this good will lacks the exclusive assessment of oral reading fluency, and as a result it bears very mild fruits. That is, candidates are not tested and graded on oral reading as it would have been expected, but instead they are evaluated on general issues. This scenario undoubtedly renders it difficult to oral reading fluency fully as an individual topic.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The researchers first approached the Ministry of Education for permission and its assistance with regard to the research. They were further asked to help identify schools in each district which could be listed for interviews. It was expected that 4 schools would be visited per district and the total would be 40 schools. In one district it would be 2 primary schools, one in the lowlands and one in the rural, it would also be the case with post-primary one in the lowlands and one from the rural area. All in all there would be 20 primary schools and 20 post-primary schools; 20 from rural areas and 20 from urban areas. Criterion for the selection of schools was as follows; best performing schools in Sesotho and those that do not do well in Sesotho. Assistance from Examination Council of Lesotho was also sought on the Sesotho performance in schools. That is, there would be one best performing primary and one best post-primary, and one unsatisfactorily performing primary and one post-primary school. Purposive sampling was employed in a pool of schools from both best and unsatisfactory ones where one school at primary and post-primary would be selected for oral reading tests and interview. Purposive sampling was used when selecting schools from rural and urban areas depending on the terrain of each district.

Researchers chose Standard 6 and Form D students. Standard 6 was selected because they could be said to have gone long a way at primary level and ought to be capable of Sesotho oral reading. At post-primary Form D students were selected on the basis that they have had enough experience from A and could be in a position to read fluently. A sample of 4 students per school was said to be enough for oral reading test and for interview in 10 districts. This sample comprised of students who were below average, average and above average with regard to Sesotho oral reading. In total 16 students per district were expected to participate in 10 districts, and the total number of students to be interviewed was 160 but came to 156 as the research team had a problem with one rural high school at the last minute due to its administrative problems.

These criteria assisted researchers during interviews and in the analysis in answering questions such as; why some are below while others are above average? What could be done to help those below the average? Oral reading test for students was expected to take at least three minutes while interview was expected to take at least five minutes but time varied due to circumstances that prevailed in each school per student.

Research team identified Sesotho teachers in the classes selected as the appropriate personnel for teachers' interview which was expected to be five minutes. Interview for teachers was meant to gather information regarding the assessment of Sesotho oral reading activity, problems encountered and possible solutions for the improvement of Sesotho oral reading fluency. The total number of 39 teachers were interviewed, 20 primary and 19 from the high schools due to the problem mentioned earlier.

PRESENTATION OF RESPONSES FROM TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Teachers' responses to questionnaire

The section covers teachers' responses in this format: primary schools both rural and lowlands, and high schools both rural and lowlands. Their responses are on the following major questions:

- Do you teach Sesotho oral reading and explain how you teach it?
- Do you encounter problems when teaching Sesotho oral reading and what are they?
- Which strategies would you recommend to improve the Sesotho oral reading in your school?
- Do you assess students on Sesotho oral reading?
- Would you recommend the inclusion of Sesotho oral reading in the quarterly and/or end of year examination?

Primary Schools' Presentation

Total Female Teachers =15 Age range 30-54

Total Male Teachers = 5 Age range 33-64

Table 1. Rural Primary Teachers' Responses

Methods	-Individual students reading in class. -Teachers select individual student to read to the whole class
Problems Encountered	-Students have no desire to read Sesotho. -Students make errors on punctuation marks. -Shortage of Sesotho publications for students to read.
Improvements /Solutions	-Make students read orally in small groups. -Train them to read through frequent exercises. -Introduction of oral Sesotho reading competitions. -Teachers to obtain Sesotho newspapers and make students read them orally in class.
Assessment	-Teachers give quizzes on oral examination. -Teachers do not examine students on oral reading in class.
Inclusion of Oral Reading	Inclusion of end of year oral exam would improve students pass mark. Oral exam would make students more interested in Sesotho. -The teachers believe that oral reading be an examinable subject to encourage students to read Sesotho orally.

High School Presentation

Total Female Teachers = 13 Age range 26-59

Total Male Teachers = 6 Age range 35 -51

Table 2. Rural High School Teachers' Responses

Oral Reading	- Teachers do teach Sesotho oral reading in class. - The teachers perform Sesotho oral reading in class with the students.
Methods	- Students read individually in class and the teacher resolves issues after they have all read. - Method used is each student reads orally in class. - Each student is given a text to read by the teacher.
Problems Encountered	- Students are unable to pronounce words in Sesotho correctly. - Students cannot understand grammatical marks used in Sesotho. - Students read in a staggered manner and are not fluent in their reading ability. - Some students do not know how to read at all. - Other students are shy when reading orally in public. - Some students have no interest in reading Sesotho at all.
Improvements /Solutions	- Teacher to make students to read oral text one at a time. - Teacher to assist students with the correct usage of grammatical marks used in Sesotho. - Make students read Sesotho publications much more frequently. - Students should be taught the importance of knowing how to read Sesotho.
Assessment	- The teachers do not examine the students on oral Sesotho reading in class. - The teachers do not examine the students on oral reading of Sesotho quarterly or at the end of the year.
Inclusion of Oral Reading	- The teachers encourage the inclusion of oral Sesotho reading as an examinable subject in schools.

Summary

The teachers interviewed for the oral fluency in Sesotho exercise gave varying views with regard to the current status of the Sesotho language and its being spoken by primary and high school students. The teachers interviewed were thirty-nine throughout the ten districts of Lesotho. Female teachers were the majority whilst male teachers made up the minority.

Comments by the teachers ranged from requests to include the oral Sesotho reading as an examinable component of Sesotho to address concerns that students were disinterested in reading Sesotho to an extent that some students did not know how to read at all.

Teachers had extensive problems finding reading materials written in Sesotho for the students to read orally in class. Access to Sesotho newspapers, text books and magazines is very difficult for the teachers and the students, in most schools do not have adequate budgets for text books let alone newspapers and magazines printed in Sesotho for students to read at school or at home.

Students' responses to questionnaire

This section highlights the responses of students to different questions directed to them. The main ones were as follows:

- Are you taught Sesotho oral reading at school?
- Explain how you are taught Sesotho oral reading at school.
- Which difficulties do you encounter when reading Sesotho orally?
- Which suggestions would you recommend to improve Sesotho oral reading in schools?
- Are you assessed in Sesotho oral reading?
- Would you recommend the inclusion of Sesotho oral reading component in the Sesotho syllabus?

Primary Schools Students' Presentation

Table 3. Rural Primary School Students' Responses

Total Female Students = 22 Age range 11-13

Total Male Students = 20 Age range 10-17

Oral Reading of Sesotho	- Students are taught Sesotho oral reading in class.
Methods	- Each student reads according to his/her seating position in class.
Problems Encountered	- Mispronunciation of Sesotho words. - Difficulty with punctuation marks.
Improvements /Solutions	- Read Sesotho publications more frequently.
Assessment	- There is an oral assessment which is not included in the exam.
Inclusion of Oral Reading	- Recommend inclusion of Sesotho oral reading in examination in order to assist in the overall pass mark.

Table 4. Lowlands Primary School Students' Responses

Total Female Students = 20 Age range 11-13

Total Male Students = 22 Age range 10-16

Oral Reading	- They are taught oral reading
Methods	- Given text books to read for themselves.
Problems Encountered	- Mispronunciation of Sesotho words. - Difficulty with punctuation markings.
Improvements /Solutions	- They should be given Sesotho text books to read.
Assessment	- They are orally assessed in Sesotho oral reading.
Inclusion of Oral Reading	- Sesotho syllabus should be included amongst examinable components of Sesotho.

High School Presentation

Table 5. Rural High School Students' Responses

Total Female Students = 22 Age range 14-19

Total Male Students = 20 Age range 17-21

Oral Reading	- They are taught oral reading of Sesotho.
Methods	- Individual reading in class.

Problems Encountered	- Mispronunciation of Sesotho words. - Difficulty with punctuation markings.
Improvements /Solutions	- Students would ask knowledgeable person when having difficulties.
Assessment	- They are not examined on oral reading of Sesotho.
Inclusion of Oral Reading	- Students would like oral reading of Sesotho to be included in end of the year examinations.

Table 6. Lowlands High School Students' Responses

Total number of Female Students = 22 Age range 17-20

Total number of Male Students = 20 Age range 18-21

Oral Reading	- Students are taught oral reading of Sesotho in class.
Methods	- Individual reading is done by students in class.
Problems Encountered	- Mispronunciation of Sesotho words. - Difficulties with punctuation marks.
Improvements /Solutions	- Read more Sesotho publications more frequently.
Assessment	- They are not examined on oral reading of Sesotho.
Inclusion of Oral Reading	- Students would like the inclusion of oral Sesotho reading at the end of the year examinations.

Table 7. Students Overall Responses

Oral Reading	Methods	Problems Encountered	Improvements / Solutions	Assessments	Inclusion of Oral Reading	General Overview
Yes there is oral reading in schools both primary and high school.	Oral reading is done through open class room reading.	Lack of adequate reading materials.	Use of adequate reading materials.	There should be examinations for oral Sesotho reading.	Students agree that oral Sesotho reading should be included amongst examinable components of Sesotho.	Oral Sesotho reading is enjoyable and should be encouraged in schools.

Overall personal reaction of students of their feeling during oral reading exercise

Negative responses

- Some indicated that they were nervous during the reading session.
- They nearly collapsed during the reading session.
- Did not want to read or finish the given text due to mispronunciation.
- Did not even understand the extract.
- Quite afraid as they were not used to reading.

Positive responses

- Some enjoyed reading because they like Sesotho.
- Some found the extract interesting as they normally read texts.

- Some felt like reading the extract again as they enjoyed the text.
- Some felt excited as they could read without staggering.

Overall Problems Encountered by Teachers and Students on Sesotho Oral Reading:

Table 8. Teachers' Problems

Not interested in reading.
Students do not volunteer to read.
No reading lessons.
Problem of pronunciation.
Staggering during reading.
Problems with punctuation.
No reading materials.
Students do not volunteer to do oral reading.
Lack of understanding the new curriculum.
Automatic promotion where students are allowed to proceed to the next class while still not ready.
Learners are forced to speak and communicate in English and as such have negative attitude towards Sesotho.

Table 9. Overall students' problems

Problems of Reading
Appropriate pronunciation of words.
Observation of punctuation marks while reading.
Being laughed at by class mates.
Cannot read quickly/slow pace when ready.
Skip words.
Insert words.
Repeat words while reading.

Overall recommended improvements from teachers and students:

Teachers and students

Regular reading.

Drilling pronunciation.

Reading competitions.

Use of punctuation marks when writing.

Drill punctuation.

Random choice of learners in everyday oral reading in class.

Reading lessons done regularly.

Read variety of materials regularly in class in groups.

Summarization after reading passages.

One by one oral reading.

Reading in groups.

Summary report after reading.

Guided reading.

Students' Guided reading

Develop a culture of regular reading and pre-read by class.

Ask teachers' guidance and seek help from them.

Seek help from class mates and friends.

Read slowly.

Develop a culture of voluntarily reading and reading for pleasure.

ANALYSIS

This section covers overall comparative analysis of students' oral reading fluency in this format: all rural schools against all lowlands schools in both primary and high schools. .

Primary Schools

Overall Rural Primary Schools Presentation

Table 10. Total Males Rural Primary School

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
M 21	2-56	0-53	0-8	0-3	0-15

Table 11. Total Females Rural Primary School

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
F 21	25-57	1-14	2-18	0-3	0-4

Overall Lowlands Primary Schools Presentation

Table 12. Total Males Lowlands Primary School

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
M 21	3-57	1-57	0-16	0-20	0-15

Table 13. Total Females Lowlands Primary School

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
F 21	6-53	0-40	0-18	0-10	0-12

Comparative analysis of Rural and Lowlands Primary Schools.

Table 14. Total Rural Males Vs Total Lowlands Males Primary School

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
M (R)	2-56	0-53	0-8	0-3	0-15
M (L)	3-57	1-57	0-16	0-20	0-15

Correctly read

Both rural and lowlands males have comparatively read and pronounced words correctly due to similar exposure to similar classroom situations.

Incorrectly read

Lowlands's males comparatively read more words incorrectly as compared to rural males. This might be due to the fact that probably they were frightened.

Read with staggering

Here the lowlands males have a higher percentage of reading with staggering.

Skipped words

Lowlands's males skipped more words than rural males.

Inserted words

Both rural and lowlands males are the same here probably due to exposure to similar classroom situation.

Table 15. Total Rural Females vs Total Lowlands Females Primary School

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
F (R)	25-57	1-14	2-18	0-3	0-4
F (L)	6-53	0-40	0-18	0-10	0-12

Correctly read

Rural females have read many words correctly than lowlands females.

Incorrectly read

Lowland females have read many words incorrectly than rural females.

Read with staggering

Here, both rural and lowlands females are comparatively the same.

Skipped words

Lowlands' females skipped more words than the rural females maybe due to lack of Sesotho textbooks or lack of reading culture.

Inserted words

Lowlands's females inserted many words than the rural females.

Table 16. Countrywide Primary Males vs Countrywide Primary Females

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
M	2 - 57	0 - 57	0 - 16	0 - 20	0 - 15
F	6-57	0-40	0-18	0-10	0-12

Correctly read

Females performed better than the males country wide.

Incorrectly read

Females once again performed better than males here.

Read with staggering

Males performed better than the females here country wide.

Skipped words

Females performed well here than the males.

Inserted words

Comparatively females performed better than the males country wide.

Summary

Rural females performed better across all the categories against their Lowlands female student counterparts.

The students in the ten (10) rural primary schools in the ten districts were found to be avid readers but without ready access to reading material written in Sesotho. The students expressed difficulty in being able to understand punctuation marks used in Sesotho and pronunciation of words in written text. Primary school students in the rural areas were expected to have an extensive knowledge of Sesotho due to their proximity to parents and rural folk who use the language continuously but their ability was still below reasonable expectation.

The students in the lowlands primary schools experienced much of the same issues of understanding punctuation marks utilized in Sesotho and the pronunciation of words in Sesotho. Their opinion was that lack of Sesotho publications and oral reading in class and outside of school contributed to their poor ability to read Sesotho orally and understand the punctuation markings used in the language.

High Schools

Overall Rural High Schools Presentation

Table 17. Total Rural Males High Schools

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
M 21	30-57	0-9	0-8	0-3	0-3

Table 18. Total Rural Females High Schools

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
F 21	48-58	0-6	0-13	0-2	0-5

Overall Lowlands High School Presentation

Table 19. Total Lowlands Males High Schools

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
M 21	20-58	0-30	0-20	0-6	0-4

Table 20. Total Lowlands Females High Schools

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
F 21	47-60	0-5	0-13	0-9	0-5

Comparative analysis of Rural and Lowlands High Schools.

Table 21. Rural Males Vs Lowlands Males High Schools

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
M (R)	30-57	0-9	0-8	0-3	0-3
M (L)	20-58	0-30	0-20	0-6	0-4

Correctly read

In this category, rural males performed better than lowlands males even though both parties performed well. The reason for this good performance might be their exposure to similar facilities in schools.

Incorrectly read

Lowlands's males performed better than the rural males probably due to good culture of reading Sesotho textbooks, having good Sesotho teachers or a good Sesotho speaking practice at their homes.

Read with staggering

Rural males have a satisfactory performance in this category as compared to lowlands males.

Skipped words

In this category again rural males performed better the lowlands males maybe due to their exposure to good Sesotho reading material both at home and school.

Inserted words

Rural males did well as compared to lowlands males.

Table 22. Rural Females vs Lowlands Females High Schools

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
F (R)	48-58	0-6	0-13	0-2	0-5
F (L)	47-60	0-5	0-13	0-9	0-5

Correctly read

Rural females performed better as compared to lowlands females.

Incorrectly read

The performance of both Rural and Lowlands's females is comparatively the same maybe due to exposure to similar working and reading conditions / facilities at their respective homes or schools.

Read with staggering

In this category, the performance of two groups is the same maybe due to similar reading culture and availability of Sesotho reading materials at their respective schools.

Skipped words

Rural females skipped few words as compared to lowlands females due to good reading culture they had.

Inserted Words

Performance of both groups is similar due to exposure to Sesotho reading culture.

Table 23. Countrywide High School Males vs Countrywide High Schools Females

Gender	Correctly read Range	Incorrectly read Range	Read with staggering Range	Skipped words Range	Inserted words Range
M	20-58	0-30	0-20	0-6	0-4
F	47-60	0-6	0-13	0-9	0-5

Correctly read

Comparatively females performed well in this category countrywide as it is always the common observation that females are better Sesotho oral readers than males due to their exposure to a variety of Sesotho materials and Sesotho reading platforms like churches at this age.

Incorrectly read

Again here females did very well as compared to males due to similar reasons given in the above category.

Read with staggering

Even in this category, females still performed well as compared to males country wide.

Skipped words

Here, males performed better than females since they were very slow in the reading process.

Inserted words

Even here, males performed better than females due to the same reason given above (skipped words).

Summary

Rural high schools had a poor track record as far as the oral reading of Sesotho was concerned. Students failed to pronounce Sesotho words and could not easily comprehend the punctuation marks used in Sesotho. The high schools students in this rural setting still

experienced the lack of Sesotho publications as well as low oral reading of Sesotho in school.

The lowlands high schools fared no better than their rural counterparts. A lack of understanding of punctuation marks used in the Sesotho language and pronunciation of differing words in Sesotho inhibited the student's ability to read oral Sesotho during the oral fluency exercise. The average age of eighteen years for the students also demonstrated that oral reading of Sesotho in high schools has not been well implemented.

Conclusion

Upon examination of the results it is evident that students whether in primary or high school in the lowlands outperformed the students in the rural schools, primary or high school. Urban living tends to promote a better reading culture amongst the students as those in the lowlands have access to more and varied reading materials as opposed to those in the rural areas. A strengthening of the school library system in the rural area schools is required in order for there to be change in the reading habits of rural students vis a vis those of urban or lowland students.

CONCLUSION

The study on oral fluency of Sesotho by primary and high school students in the lowlands and highlands of Lesotho throughout the ten (10) districts established the following;

Negative Findings

Lack of access to Sesotho written materials for students i.e. newspapers, text books and Magazines.

Students across the ten districts have poor reading habits with some not able to read at all.

Teachers do not examine students on oral Sesotho exercises in the interim or at the end of year.

Students have extreme difficulty in the pronunciation of Sesotho words when reading Sesotho texts orally.

Students have great difficulty in understanding and utilizing Sesotho grammatical marks used in written and spoken Sesotho.

Most schools do not have adequate budgets for text books let alone newspapers and magazines printed in Sesotho for students to read at school or at home.

Lowland schools on average performed better than Highland schools in terms of the most correct words read.

Highland schools performed worse than Lowland schools on correct words read with 17% fewer correct words read.

Positive Findings

Students enjoyed the oral reading exercise.

Teachers found it enlightening and showed them the status of their students vis a vis their oral reading skills.

Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations to the following institutions National Curriculum Development Centre, Education Inspectorate, Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL), Teachers Service Commission (TSC), and Students:

Oral Sesotho reading must be included as an examinable subject in the national schools' curricula for both primary and high schools.

Schools both primary and high school must be given access to Sesotho written materials such as newspapers, text books and magazines to encourage students to read material written in Sesotho in order to improve their understanding and ability to read orally written Sesotho and understand the punctuation marks used in the language.

Teachers should be encouraged to instruct students clearly in the grammatical marks utilized in Sesotho so that students become familiar with them and know how to use them effectively.

Students should have easy access to Sesotho written materials both at school and at home to encourage them to read Sesotho.

Sesotho's status as one of the two official languages in Lesotho must be cemented by its formal teaching as an oral examinable subject in Lesotho Primary and High schools.

Summary

The study has been invaluable in determining the position of Sesotho as a language taught in Lesotho's schools. It has been established that students are currently not enthusiastic about reading in Sesotho but oral fluency exercise was a novel experience for the students and teachers as well and should the versatility of the language in its degrees of expression and difficulty to master it without applying ones self to its strictures.

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