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Dedication and determination: The key to insightful publications

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It is only with the support of our dedicated and active editorial team that we have been able to publish 23 original research articles in 2025. We would like to thank the many local and international reviewers for their time, commitment and passion in shaping the reputation of our journal. In this issue of *Reading & Writing* we are proud to present you with two international articles: from Pakistan ('Evaluating oral reading fluency in English as a Second Language: A quantitative analysis' [Dogar et al. 2025]), and Indonesia ('Cognitive religious alignment in expressive writing: Insights from Islamic schools' [Kurniawan et al. 2025]). The remaining articles originated from the following universities: Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), the University of Johannesburg (UJ), Central University of Technology (CUT), Nelson Mandela University, University of South Africa (UNISA), North-West University (NWU), Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), Aston University in Birmingham, United Kingdom, University of the Western Cape (UCT), University of Zambia, University of Namibia, University of Pretoria, and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits).

As a result of a pre-conference Litasa writing retreat we hosted 09–12 September 2024, we have had one Special Collection titled 'Literacy learning across contexts: home – play – work' with seven publications in 2025. Thanks go to Dr Zelda Barends for managing this topical collection:

- Family language policy: Choices in isiXhosa families and implications for multilingual education (Xeketwana, Xeketwana & Anthonissen 2025)
- Literacy support in practice: Grade 3 teachers' experiences with government reading interventions (Khan, Van der Merwe & Koekemoer 2025)
- Perception of Montessori preschool teachers regarding literacy development through technology-supported play-based activities (Omidire et al. 2025)
- 'Why do children have to hide their true selves in important places (like class)?' (Reynolds 2025)
- Fostering reading-culture of pre-teen community friends via reading play dates (Yafele 2025)
- Community literacy club and family language policymaking initiatives for biliteracy development (Guzula & Molate 2025)
- Educators of inmates: Reflections on a five-day Reading-for-Meaning workshop (Condy & Phillips 2025).

These seven interdisciplinary articles focus on how learning is shaped across home, play and work environments, through a socio-cultural perspective. The authors presented their findings on how everyday contexts influence reading and writing practices and how this information contributes to current literacy scientific knowledge in different ways. The article 'Family language policy: Choices in isiXhosa families and implications for multilingual education' (Xeketwana, Xeketwana & Anthonissen 2025) focuses on the development of family policy within multilingual families attempting to balance language maintenance with socio-economic opportunities in a linguistically diverse setting. The article 'Literacy support in practice: Grade 3 teachers' experiences with government reading interventions' (Khan et al. 2025) features Grade 3 teacher support, reflecting on the impact of using the Department of Basic Education (DBE) reading support programmes and materials. Omidire et al.'s (2025) article, 'Perception of Montessori preschool teachers regarding literacy development through technology-supported play-based activities', is the first article to ever have been published in *Reading & Writing* on this novel context of Montessori preschool teachers. This publication discusses a relatively unexplored topic, which is integrating a technologically supported play-based Montessori approach to foster literacy in the South African context. Despite some teachers reporting on the misalignment of integrating technology with the Montessori approach, some educators believe that it could encourage literacy development, especially in resource-constrained schools. Reynolds' (2025) article 'Why do children have to hide their true selves in important places (like class)?' shows the exciting implications for classroom practice and methodological insights for teachers when children are

allowed to show how they think and not simply that they are always thinking. The article 'Fostering reading-culture of pre-teen community friends via reading play dates' (Yafele 2025) concludes that play dates involving reading activities, entwined in everyday home experiences such as play and friendships that children naturally enjoy as part of growing up, can offer workable strategies at home in early Literacy Learning, fostering reading love and culture with educational benefits. Guzula and Molate describe and analyse the initiatives taken by both community members of a literacy club and family members in challenging separate bilingualism, monoglossic, and anglonormative ideologies in their article, 'Community literacy club and family language policymaking initiatives for biliteracy development'. In their article 'Educators of inmates: Reflections on a five-day Reading-for-Meaning workshop' Condy and Phillips (2025) explored the learning experiences of educators using innovative Reading-for-Meaning literacy pedagogical practices for inmates.

South Africa has participated in many international and local monitoring and assessment research projects such as: the Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS) in 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 (Roux 2025), the South and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality study (SEACEQ) (The Centre for Global Education Monitoring 2015), and more recently, the South African Systemic Evaluations (SASE). We have been constantly asking ourselves how can we build the kind of stability in our schooling system that encourages learning, builds learners' confidence and embraces change? This has become a moral dilemma. However, in this 2025 issue it is pleasing to see that we have three articles that deal with university level literacy dealing with topics such as transitioning to university (Chimenya 2025), factors affecting first-year student academic writing (Mudau et al. 2025), and determining how students feel about reading and its importance in their academic lives (Cekiso 2025). The other articles are based in the schooling sector and their topics cover a range of current significant literacy issues including: translanguaging – multilingual language pedagogies, cartoons on teaching science terminology, comprehension skills and open-ended resources, reading materials for teaching comprehension, First Additional Language reading, essay writing in public school, and poor reading skills. All these articles are based in pre-school (Abiyo et al. 2025), Early Grade (West & Kersop 2025), Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase. One article deals with policy issues. Abiyo et al. (2025) discuss how wordless picture books can promote language skills in rural African settings, emphasizing the importance of wordless picture books in improving literacy and encouraging family involvement in early education. I am pleasantly impressed by the variety of methodologies our authors applied, from narrative discussions using a qualitative approach, literature-based analysis, quantitative analysis to mixed-methods approach. Then there is the article, 'Using a reading comprehension heuristic to plan a mixed-methods research design' by which Adrianatos (2025) presents a methodological reflection of how a mixed-methods novice dealt with research design challenges in a research project on reading comprehension.

It is interesting to note, especially in 2025, that there are only two articles dealing with technology use in the literacy classroom, one is the earlier discussed 'Perception of Montessori preschool teachers regarding literacy development through technology-supported play-based activities' of Omidire et al. (2025); and the other is Burger et al. (2025) 'Exploring open education resources for teaching pre-reading in the Intermediate Phase'. In this article the authors claim that the success of an open education resource (OER) in attempting to improve teaching and learning in the Intermediate Phase classroom depends on the design and accessibility. They suggest that OERs support activating prior knowledge, expanding vocabulary and developing metacognitive skills by linking them to the four Rs of education – reuse, revise, remix and redistribute.

An interesting observation is that Mokobe et al. (2025) focused on the *poor* quality of literacy teaching in 'Teachers' voices on the poor reading skills of Setswana-speaking Foundation Phase learners'. What the authors conveyed in this article is that they feel there is no effective system in place for educators to enhance reading instruction and support their learners. By exposing this gap, and showing the extent of the problems, they hope to identify measures to address them. While Ntshangase (2025) dealt with the *poor* amount of isiZulu reading materials in primary schools: 'Reading materials for teaching Intermediate Phase isiZulu inclusive reading comprehension: A qualitative analysis advocates for designing inclusive and effective resources to improve learners' reading comprehension skills. They make the claim that there is a significant shortage of African language reading material in primary schools appropriate to isiZulu learners that stimulate their cognitive reading abilities. Additionally, West & Kersop (2025) address the lack of proficient reading skills by revealing how teachers view the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tool, which was created to help teachers understand students' reading capacities and make well-informed decisions about their reading instruction.

The concept of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in schools is ubiquitous, with many articles addressing this issue. Learners from Grade 1 to Grade 3 are taught in one of the 11 official home languages, and in Grade 4 the LoLT becomes predominantly English or Afrikaans. Equally important, Kubuzie, Rwodzy and Smith (2025) identify specific language-related challenges in essay writing among Grade 9 learners in selected Soshanguve schools, which shows the writing challenges when learners must write without technology assistance. Recently there have been moves to change this to extend home-language instruction (Grant & Manoim 2025). Many lecturers at universities are grappling with this multilingual issue and so it is pleasing that they publish their articles in *Reading & Writing* journal.

The article 'Hybridity and eclecticism in rethinking the multilingual turn in English language pedagogies' (Feltman 2025) concludes that innovative pedagogical practices, need to ensure that all languages in the learners' repertoires are valued and that education should reflect the sociocultural realities in South Africa. As the title suggests, they advocate for a hybrid approach integrating translanguaging and plurilingualism, proposing a multilingual and multicultural education system in South Africa. Abrahams' (2025) article, 'Enhancing South African science education: The impact of concept cartoons on teaching terminology during science investigations in intermediate phase', suggests that as a tool to enhance learners' comprehension, to increase their level of engagement and scientific terminology usage, using cartoons could support the teachers' pedagogical practices and the learners' LoLT and First Additional Language development. The article 'Exploring Grade 8 English First Additional Language learners reading comprehension challenges' Molwantoa et al. (2025) established that their learners experienced challenges with pronunciation and experienced limited vocabulary during comprehension tasks. Liswaniso and Pretorius (2025) describes and examines patterns and relationships between the vocabulary knowledge of Grade 11 learners at different word frequency levels and their reading comprehension performance. This article adds to the understanding of how learning and academic achievement in high-poverty contexts might be slowed down by poor schooling. This situation was further intensified by the teacher's inability to explicitly teach comprehension skills, low parental literacy, low socioeconomic issues in the communities and the lack of school libraries. Another article on this topic is from Dogar et al. (2025), 'Evaluating oral reading in English as a Second Language: A quantitative analysis', is a study conducted in Pakistan where they studied Second Language oral reading fluency (ORF). This study was instigated from the fact that there were no ORF scores reported in any schools in Pakistan. Their quantitative analysis indicates that 90% of Grade 7 English as Second Language (ESL) learners fell within the 10th percentile compared to the ORF norms. They suggest that the low ORF scores are a result of that lack of systematic reading practices in Pakistan public schools.

Writing and reading are topics that have been written about three times in 2025 both at the university level and at the school level. Mudau et al.'s (2025) article 'First-year students' perceptions of factors affecting academic writing', highlights the gap in academic preparation between high school and university level, particularly in academic writing. The authors encourage targeted support to overcome this gap which they believe will improve the students' academic writing proficiency. Another article based at university level is titled 'Transition from high school to university: First-year students' reading experiences' (Chimenya 2025). Many studies have been conducted on students transitioning from high school to university and many of them confirm that these students lack reading for meaning at a critical level. The contributing factors include: the complexity of more intricate and difficult academic texts, their heavy workload at university, learning to be an independent student, and time management. Although two lecturers and 48 first-year extended degree students were purposively selected for this study, the findings reveal that the interventions to assist these learners develop academic literacy conventions was inadequate.

Kurniawan et al. (2025) write about school-level research that was conducted in Indonesia, 'Cognitive religious alignment in expressive writing: Insights from Islamic schools', concluded that the integration of religious content into expressive writing interventions was effective in supporting the emotional regulation, resilience and cognitive problem-solving skills of their learners. This article offers a framework for implementing religiously informed expressive writing interventions that support the holistic development of students in their Islamic educational settings.

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