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ENHANCING READING PROFICIENCY THROUGH FOLKTALES: AN APPLICATION OF COMBRINK'S MODEL AMONG FIRST-YEAR SETSWANA HOME LANGUAGE STUDENT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the reading abilities of first-year Setswana Home Language students in a South African higher education context, with particular focus on their engagement with folktale texts. Despite being enrolled in their home language, many students experience challenges related to reading fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension. Guided by Combrink's reading model, the study employed a qualitative research design involving classroom observations and focus group interviews with 30 first-year students. The findings reveal that students struggled with accurate pronunciation, tonal variation, reading fluency, and the interpretation of unfamiliar words. However, the implementation of structured reading strategies, including reading aloud and guided interaction with folktales, contributed to noticeable improvements in students' reading abilities. Students reported positive perceptions of reading aloud, indicating enhanced engagement, confidence, and comprehension. Furthermore, the use of folktales as culturally relevant texts facilitated deeper cognitive and emotional engagement, enabling students to connect meaningfully with the content. The study concludes that the integration of folktales with structured reading models such as Combrink's can significantly enhance reading proficiency among teacher education students. The paper recommends the use of diverse and culturally responsive reading strategies to support literacy development in multilingual higher education contexts.

Keywords: Reading proficiency; Setswana Home Language; folktales; Combrink's model; reading fluency; higher education; multilingualism; reading aloud