

The Experiences of the Pre-Service Teachers on the Use of Cartoons as a Teaching Tool in English First Additional Language Grade Ten Classes in Eastern Cape



Lundi Nomlala¹  & Nomasomi Hilda Matiso² 

¹ Humanities and Creative Arts Education Department, Walter Sisulu University, Queenstown, South Africa.

² Adult and Education Foundations Department, Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

This study's primary goal was to explore pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching cartoons as a teaching tool to improve learners' critical thinking, engagement, and language acquisition in grade ten English First Additional Language (EFAL) classes in Eastern Cape. The pre-service teachers typically participated in the School-Based Experience (SBE) for five weeks, and upon returning, they wrote reflections on their experiences. Their reflections were part of a qualitative study with an interpretivist paradigm. Purposefully, ten pre-service teachers were chosen from a teacher education program. The data from their written reflections were interpreted using thematic analysis. The results revealed that pre-service teachers know how cartoons can enhance learning, promote visual literacy, and enhance comprehension. However, they mentioned obstacles, including scarce resources, insufficient exposure of grade ten learners to cartoons, the English language as a barrier to understanding cartoons, and their failure to follow instructions. Furthermore, the lack of digital access in rural school settings limited the complete incorporation of animated or digital cartoons. The study contributes to the knowledge of teaching EFAL by highlighting the importance of multimodal literacy and creative teaching techniques in resource-constrained settings. There is a need for access to resources. Among the recommendations are to improve resource accessibility in rural areas, offering professional development for educators on multimodal teaching techniques, and to integrate visual literacy into the EFAL curricula. The long-term effects of cartoon use on the language competency and critical thinking abilities of EFAL learners should be investigated in future studies.

Correspondence

Lundi Nomlala

Email:

lnomlala@wsu.ac.za

Publication History

Received:

22nd March, 2025

Accepted:

16th July, 2025

Published:

28th August, 2025

To Cite this Article:

Nomlala, Lundi, and Nomasomi Hilda Matiso. "The Experiences of the Pre-Service Teachers on the Use of Cartoons as a Teaching Tool in English First Additional Language Grade Ten Classes in Eastern Cape," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 6, no. 9 (2025): 2015 - 2025, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20256919>.

Keywords: Pre-service teachers, English First Additional Language, cartoons, multimodal literacy, rural education.

INTRODUCTION

The days of accepting quiet classrooms are long gone in education for this generation. Noisy classrooms are popular today, but should be balanced with constructive debate and discussions accompanied by humour attached to cartoons to teach English language development to learners who learn English as a First Additional language.¹ One strategy that can help learners manage their stress from the lessons is humour, which is embedded in the cartoons. From a medical perspective, humor can help patients feel

¹ M. Kaur, "Cartoon as an Instructional Strategy for Language Learning," *Shodh Sarita an International Bilingual Peer Reviewed Refereed Research Journal* 8, no. 29 (2021): 107–12.

better, lift them out of depression, and significantly improve their quality of life. Similarly, in education, cartoons might bring life the learners by equipping them to be critical thinkers and more interactive in engagements such as classroom debates and discussions. The importance of humour brought about by cartoons in the teaching and learning process is well acknowledged, especially when creating a supportive learning atmosphere.² This study focuses on cartoons to enhance language development in grade ten learners in rural settings where English is learned as the FAL.

Cartoons are crucial for language development in learners learning English as a FAL or Second Language (SL). What are cartoons? Cartoons are a humorous, two-dimensional, illustrated visual medium that can be either a single image or a sequence of images with or without captions.³ Cartoons are a crucial part of the curriculum and are part of the examinations/ assessments for the English FAL. However, in rural areas, it is not as easy as people would anticipate; for instance, learners are not doing well when they are supposed to answer and respond to the questions posed in cartoons. To support the above claim, the Chief Markers Report revealed that learners struggle with cartoon analysis, such as engaging with, answering the higher-order questions, figurative meaning, and the cartoon's non-verbal language in the Eastern Cape Province schools. This is a call to emphasize how critical it is to improve learners' cartoon analysis skills.⁴ When learners struggle with cartoon analysis, it becomes very difficult to understand what is being asked in the exams. They end up not scoring well and their grades decline. The performance is adversely affected. Additionally, few or no studies have been carried out on cartoon analysis by English FAL learners in schools located in rural areas.

There remains a gap in understanding why grade ten learners are not doing well on the cartoon section in their exams. In the university we are working for, there is a program for the pre-service teachers where they go for the school-based experience (SBE); they are given a chance to teach some topics by their mentors in the schools. They were allowed to teach cartoons to the grade ten learners who learned English as a FAL. Hence, this study aims to explore the pre-service teachers' experiences in teaching cartoons in grade ten classes where English is learned as the FAL in Eastern Cape secondary schools located in rural areas. The research question that guided this study was:

- What are the pre-service teachers' experiences teaching cartoons in English FAL grade ten classes in Eastern Cape?

Thus, the objective of this study was to:

- Explore the experiences of the pre-service teachers on the teaching of cartoons in English FAL grade ten classes in Eastern Cape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cartoons have been investigated worldwide to improve language learning and critical thinking abilities in English as a FAL. Across the world, cartoons have been identified as a tool for improving language acquisition, particularly for learners who learn English as their FAL. See Figure 1, where a teacher is teaching verbs to a class; the activities are also presented in the different frames.

² Masdianti Masdianti, "The Implementation of Teachers' Humor in The Classroom," *SELTICS* 4, no. 2 (December 30, 2021): 110–20, <https://doi.org/10.46918/seltics.v4i2.1017>.

³ Kaur, "Cartoon as an Instructional Strategy for Language Learning."

⁴ Department of Basic Education Eastern Cape, "NSC Chief Marker's Report 2023. Examinations and Assessment Chief Directorate," 2023, <https://www.ecdoe.gov.za>.



Figure 1: Example of the lesson on verbs

Cartoons are viewed as having contextual and visual aspects that sharpen the learners' critical thinking skills. The literature reveals that cartoons enhance learners' reading, speaking, and writing skills. Furthermore, cartoons are helpful to learners for entertainment purposes and are thought-provoking. Similarly, the researchers emphasized the educational benefits of cartoons, pointing out that they encourage learners' comprehension, inventiveness, and drive.⁵ Cartoons improve the relationship between teachers and students and foster a calm, stress-free environment in the classroom.⁶ These results imply that cartoons can be valuable resources for language development because they offer learners interesting and context-rich content.

Numerous case studies have been reported on the use of concept cartoons in Turkish schools where English is taught as the SL to instruct learners.⁷ Using teachers' thought-provoking questions, the idea of cartoon teaching successfully generated targeted conversations where the rationale behind learners' misconceptions could be revealed. Additionally, the cartoons promoted critical thinking skills. Similarly, their study, conducted in Turkey, employed concept cartoons in a few classrooms.⁸ They found that cartoons improved learners' perceptions of their inquiry-based learning abilities by

⁵ Naureen Nazar et al., "The Effectiveness of the Use of Cartoons in Teaching English to the Children of Grade 5: An Experimental Study," *Al Qalam* 24, no. 2 (2019): 287–92.

⁶ Sinta Maria Dewi et al., "Development of Cartoon Art Learning Media (CALM) to Improve Children's Conflict Resolution Skill," *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences* 17, no. 3 (March 31, 2022): 726–40, <https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v17i3.6889>.

⁷ Filiz Kabapınar, "Effectiveness of Teaching via Concept Cartoons from the Point of View of Constructivist Approach," *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice* 5, no. 1 (2005): 135–46.

⁸ Rajendran P. Pillay and Samantha Govender, "Exploring the Quality of Pre-Service Teachers' Critical Analysis of Cartoons within Environmental Contexts in the Life Sciences," *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa* 17, no. 1 (May 25, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4102/td.v17i1.863>.

connecting new information to what they already knew. A study conducted in the United Kingdom showed evidence supporting this theoretical aspect of concept cartoons.⁹ Their research showed that, especially in science classes, second language school learners could readily co-construct arguments without the assistance of their teachers or any prior instruction. Active learner participation, a fundamental component of constructivist learning, is supported by international research on concept cartoons.

Learner's media exposure may have beneficial learning impacts provided that it is implemented well and considers the children's attention span, developmental milestones, and exposure length. On the contrary, a study conducted in Iran, where learners spoke Hindi as their Home Language (HL) and English as a SL, revealed challenges in analyzing cartoons.¹⁰ The reason would be the lack of familiarity with English as the language of instruction. Furthermore, the study highlighted that the learners did not understand what was taught in cartoons. The above assertions highlight some difficulties and challenges English second-language learners face when dealing with cartoons. The researchers believe that this literature is relevant to this study since this study was also conducted in the areas where English is not the HL of grade ten learners who were taught cartoons.

From the perspective of Africa, cartoons play a vital role in improving learning. However, there is limited research on the infusion of cartoons into lessons in a second language. The few studies that have been carried out revealed that cartoon infusion in lessons encourages interactive engagement between a learner and a teacher. However, the language barrier remains a challenge as it impedes how learners comprehend the lessons on cartoons. It was also found that the learners could attempt the higher-order questions based on the cartoons if they understood the language of learning and teaching, English.¹¹ Additionally, there is a study that examined the experiences of pre-service teachers in teaching cartoons to grade ten learners in rural disadvantaged communities, where it was found that learners were struggling to understand the cartoons because of the lack of exposure, scarcity of resources, English language was also a barrier since they understood their mother tongue.¹²

In the Eastern Cape province, there are linguistic challenges where learners do not adequately understand the language of Teaching and Learning (LoLT), which is English, because of the communities they are coming from, the IsiXhosa-speaking communities.¹³ That has made learners not know how to engage with the cartoon; the worst part is that they obviously cannot analyze it. The research also indicates inconsistencies in South Africa's Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), where little time is dedicated to visual literacy, such as cartoons.¹⁴ This results in learners being unfamiliar with the cartoons, which worsens the problem of not understanding them; on the other hand, their critical analysis skills are compromised.

The integration of cartoons into English FAL instruction has globally enhanced learner engagement, motivation, and critical thinking skills. In the African context, and specifically in the Eastern Cape, the potential of cartoons as educational tools is recognized, but challenges persist. These challenges include a lack of teacher preparedness to effectively use cartoons and curricular inconsistencies that limit the application of critical pedagogy. Addressing these challenges through targeted teacher training and curriculum development could enable pre-service teachers in the Eastern Cape to harness the full potential of cartoons in enhancing English FAL instruction. The findings of the studies mentioned above support the study's research question, which concerns the pre-service teachers' experiences instructing cartoons in grade ten English FAL classes.

⁹ Stuart Naylor, Brenda Keogh, and Brigid Downing, "Argumentation and Primary Science," *Research in Science Education* 37, no. 1 (January 17, 2007): 17–39, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-005-9002-5>.

¹⁰ Bakht Rawan, Mahwish Dar, and Syed Abdul Siraj, "Televised Cartoons and Incidental Learning of Foreign Language among Children: A Case Study of Doraemon Cartoon in Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of Distance and Online Learning* 4, no.1 (2018): 95–110.

¹¹ C. Sajana, "Cartoons in Language Teaching and Learning," *International Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics* 119, no. 12 (2018): 2435–50.

¹² Bunmi Isaiah Omodan, "Challenges of Pre-Service Teachers in Rural Places of Teaching Practice: A Decolonial Perspectives," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 21, no. 3 (March 31, 2022): 127–42, <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.21.3.8>.

¹³ Rockie Sibanda and Lina P. Tshehla, "From Mother Tongue to English: A Language Policy Shift at a Multilingual Township School in Gauteng," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 15, no. 1 (February 28, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v15i1.1598>.

¹⁴ Madeyandile Mbelani, "An Investigation into the Development of Knowledge and Strategies for Teaching Visual Literacy in Under-Resourced Eastern Cape Schools" (Rhodes University, 2013).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is underpinned by constructivist theory, which states that learners learn through socialization.¹⁵ He believed that language is essential because it stimulates a learner's cognitive development. He further encapsulated that parents and teachers play an essential role in supporting learners' progress by proposing the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky's theory challenges learners to perform tasks above their developmental stage.¹⁶ According to Vygotsky's theory, learners can overcome difficulties by navigating from the social to the individual domains through sociocultural scaffolding. Moreover, the research states that the assistance should be short-term, which a more capable individual, such as a teacher or adult, offers to a less capable individual, such as a learner.¹⁷ However, it is argued that the task should be achievable with or without assistance.¹⁸ In this case, learners need to be assisted by the teachers so that they overcome challenges such as lack of understanding of the language (English) and instructions; the role of the teacher is to make sure that grade ten learners are given that temporal assistance (scaffolding) so that at the end they are independent and can analyze the cartoons.

Constructivist theory is relevant to this paper because the fundamental principle of Vygotsky's constructivism theory states that a learner should do something with others now and alone in the future. Consequently, the accomplishments and knowledge that learners gain through group work can now be applied individually in the future.¹⁹ For example, they can analyze cartoons as a group with more knowledgeable learners and alone in the future.

METHODOLOGY

Research paradigm

Research paradigms reduce methodological bias in research and improve the calibre of the research.²⁰ Due to their guiding assumptions and ideas, paradigms are vital in directing research and discoveries.²¹ This research employed the interpretivism paradigm. Interpretivism claims that particular views in a certain context determine what is real. Moreover, interpretivism investigates the ideas and ideologies underlying a conclusion, arguing that reality comprises the "different possibilities" in people's imaginations.²² In this study, the phenomenon of pre-service teachers undertaking school-based Experience was interpreted, as well as the behavior and attitudes of learners when taught lessons on cartoons. This research employed the interpretivism paradigm to understand how pre-service teachers view cartoon teaching in grade ten classes. The researchers then analyzed their different points of view and found what caused the cartoon challenges in grade ten classes.

Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was employed in this study. Qualitative research is a method that aims to understand human behavior and the variables that affect it fully.²³ Rather than verifying theories, the

¹⁵ Lev Semenovich Vygotsky and Michael Cole, *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Harvard university press, 1978).

¹⁶ Evi Afiati and Nurul Aisyah Sartika, "Pengaruh Pelatihan Berbasis Teori Vygotsky Terhadap Kompetensi Guru Sebagai Pembimbing," *Indonesia Journal of Learning Education and Counseling* 2, no. 2 (2020): 193–203.

¹⁷ Talip Gonulal and Shawn Loewen, "Scaffolding Technique," in *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* (Wiley, 2018), 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0180>.

¹⁸ Laura Lee and Marcin Szczerbinski, "Paired Reading as a Method of Reading Intervention in Irish Primary Schools: An Evaluation," *Irish Educational Studies* 40, no. 3 (July 3, 2021): 589–610, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2021.1927797>.

¹⁹ I Wayan Lasmawan and I Wayan Budiarta, "Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and the Students' Progress in Learning (A Heutagogical Bibliographical Review)," *JPI (Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia)* 9, no. 4 (2020): 545–52.

²⁰ Wooi Keong Yong, Maizaitulaidawati Md Husin, and Suzilawati Kamarudin, "Understanding Research Paradigms: A Scientific Guide," *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government Vol* 27, no. 2 (2021).

²¹ Yoon Soo Park, Lars Konge, and Anthony R. Artino, "The Positivism Paradigm of Research," *Academic Medicine* 95, no. 5 (May 2020): 690–94, <https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000003093>.

²² Yong, Husin, and Kamarudin, "Understanding Research Paradigms: A Scientific Guide."

²³ John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016).

nature of the qualitative approach is creative, exploratory, and subjective.²⁴ Moreover, qualitative research uses open-ended questions and probes to allow participants to react more fully and in-depth to their views.²⁵ For instance, in this study, pre-service teachers wrote their reflections on what they experienced when teaching cartoons to grade ten learners in an open way, where they were saying whatever they wanted to say in connection with cartoons that they (pre-service teachers) taught in their SBE. This method allowed the pre-service teachers to be open when writing their reflections.

Research Design

The primary objective of a research design is to guarantee that the researcher's data collected, interpreted, analyzed, and discussed enable the researcher to approach the study problem clearly and rationally.²⁶ A research design outlines a logical and unambiguous approach to answering a particular research issue. A case study design was chosen for this research. A case study organizes and investigates in a way that enables the researcher's desired outcomes and is more likely to find data that could address the researcher's questions. The researcher used the case study because, as per the aim of this research, the researcher sought to investigate with an in-depth understanding of the challenges and opportunities when teaching cartoons in English as a FAL in grade ten classes in rural contexts. Furthermore, an event must be thoroughly investigated to comprehend a real-life phenomenon and this is accomplished through a case study methodical research strategy that produces an in-depth understanding of an issue. In this case, the pre-service teachers' reflections detailed what learners face when they are learning cartoons.²⁷

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection instruments include questionnaires, documents, observations, and interviews.²⁸ In this study, data were collected through written reflections from the pre-service teachers after their SBE, providing rich qualitative insights into their perceptions and experiences gained from teaching cartoons. Thematic analysis, where common responses from the written reflections were grouped to identify data patterns, allows for a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with teaching cartoon analysis.

Population and Sampling

The population of this study comprised seventy pre-service teachers who went to undertake the SBE in different schools. For this study, a purposive sample of ten pre-service teachers participated in the SBE in rural areas with relevant knowledge and experience with teaching English FAL and cartoon analysis was selected. They reflected on their experiences teaching cartoons to grade ten learners learning English as their FAL.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics studies morally acceptable and appropriate behaviour for researchers.²⁹ The Department of Basic Education granted permission for the pre-service teachers to go for an SBE in Eastern Cape Schools. Permission was also given by Walter Sisulu University for us, as lecturers, to have reflections from the students who went to the SBE program. To consider ethics in this research, we ensured anonymity and confidentiality. We ensured anonymity by eliminating any identifiable data to protect the participants from adverse consequences. To ensure anonymity in this research, the names and school addresses of

²⁴ Joan DeJaeghere, Emily Morris, and Richard Bamattre, "Moving beyond Employment and Earnings: Reframing How Youth Livelihoods and Wellbeing Are Evaluated in East Africa," *Journal of Youth Studies* 23, no. 5 (May 27, 2020): 667–85, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2019.1636013>.

²⁵ David Beirman, "Collaborative Approaches to Government Travel Advisories in Australia between Australia's Travel Industry Leadership and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2003–2017," *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 25, no. 1 (2019): 71–87.

²⁶ DeJaeghere, Morris, and Bamattre, "Moving beyond Employment and Earnings: Reframing How Youth Livelihoods and Wellbeing Are Evaluated in East Africa."

²⁷ Hayden Coombs, "Case Study Research Defined" (Southern Utah University. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo>, 2022).

²⁸ C. Seal, *The Quality of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage, 2015).

²⁹ Louis, Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education* (Routledge, 2018).

the participants were omitted. A written agreement, indicating the responsibilities and informing the participant about them was created to ensure confidentiality.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Scarce resources

In the reflections by the pre-service teachers (PT), it was revealed that resources such as access to the internet to download cartoons were a serious challenge for them to teach cartoons in the grade ten English First Additional language class. They commented and said:

I could teach cartoons to my grade ten learners well with enough resources. The school where I did my School Experience was underprivileged because there was no access to the internet, where my learners would download cartoons and talk about them, and be as practical as possible. We depended solely on the cartoons, hard copies of the question papers, and the few textbooks in the classroom (PT2).

Learners nowadays learn in an interactive and fun way when they engage with what is taught. I faced the challenge of seeing myself theorizing cartoons rather than making my lessons more engaging. The problem is the lack of resources. For instance, I could play videos online and instruct my learners to download such cartoon videos by themselves. The situation in the school where I was doing my practicals was not allowing me to do that because of a lack of access to digital tools such as laptops and tablets (PT5).

Cartoon analysis requires practicality; in this case, learners should see what they discuss online to see features such as body language and non-verbal language. The challenge is that there was no access to the internet in the school that I was at, maybe because it is in a deep rural area. The network was also very bad (PT 9).

The comments from the written reflections by the pre-service teachers indicate that there is still a challenge in accessing resources in the schools. This can compromise the teaching of cartoons more efficiently, leaving learners without understanding and the capacity to analyze the cartoons.

The English Language as a barrier to learners' understanding

The pre-service teachers revealed that English, as the language of teaching and learning, challenges learners. Pre-service teachers reflected as follows:

It is not easy to teach cartoons to grade ten learners because most of them come from communities where English is not widely used, the communities where IsiXhosa is a dominant language, making them struggle with the English concepts that need to be understood in the cartoons. I noticed that cartoons use informal language, making things worse for the learner. English is a barrier for my learners since it is not their mother tongue (PT 3).

Pre-service teachers 7 and 10 reflected:

When these learners respond to the cartoons, I noticed that English is challenging, adversely affecting their ability to answer according to the given instructions; they need to understand what is asked before responding (PT 7).

The learners lack a clue of what is happening in the cartoons because they lack understanding of the language (English). I teach in rural areas where a lot of the IsiXhosa language is used. These learners only hear English at school; when they are out of school, they play, talk, and interact in their communities using their mother tongue, isiXhosa (PT 10).

There is no reasonable doubt that English is a barrier to learners responding to cartoon jargon. There is no way for students to master cartoon analysis if they do not understand the LoLT. On the other hand, their performance becomes weak due to the language barrier.

Lack of following the instructions

The pre-service teachers boldly commented on the learners who, in most cases, do not follow the prescribed instructions when assessed on cartoon analysis. They reflected as follows:

When I gave them an assessment of the cartoon analysis, I picked up the negligence from my learners. They do not follow the instructions; for instance, the cartoons are in frames, whereby there is frame 1 up to frame 4. For the learners to understand, they need to understand what is in frame 1, followed by 2, etc. There is always an instruction, "refer to frame 1," meaning the answer will be in frame 1. What they did was ignore such instructions and answers (PT4).

It is my understanding that cartoons need learners who are always obeying the instructions. My learners fell short of that; when I taught them, I was always telling them to thoroughly look at what was happening in the frames; in the assessment, they never bothered themselves about what was happening in the frames; they just answered for the sake of answering (PT 5).

The reflections by the pre-service teachers reveal the learners' inability to follow the given instructions, which may inhibit their cartoon analysis skills. When learners do not follow the instructions, they are likely to miss the important aspects that might be in the frame that they were referred to look at.

DISCUSSION

The study explored pre-service teachers' experiences teaching cartoons to Grade 10 English FAL learners in rural Eastern Cape secondary schools. The findings reveal critical challenges, including a lack of resources, language barriers, and learners' failure to follow instructions, all of which hinder effective cartoon analysis in the classroom.

A major challenge identified by pre-service teachers was the scarcity of resources in rural schools, particularly access to the Internet, digital tools, and visual materials needed for teaching cartoons. As PT2 and PT5 reflected, they often had to rely solely on printed question papers and limited textbooks, which restricted their ability to deliver engaging and interactive lessons. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing the importance of technology and multimedia resources in improving cartoon-based learning.³⁰ Digital resources provide learners with exposure to real-time visual content, which aids comprehension and critical thinking. The lack of such resources, particularly in underprivileged schools, limits learners' ability to engage with cartoons meaningfully and practically.³¹

Moreover, the reflections by PT9 emphasize that poor network connectivity further exacerbates the problem, making it difficult for learners to engage with online materials. This finding supports the literature that indicates that rural schools often face infrastructural challenges that hinder access to digital learning tools.³² Without adequate resources, teaching cartoons becomes theoretical rather than interactive, preventing learners from fully grasping the visual and contextual aspects necessary for analysis.

Another significant issue was the difficulty learners faced in understanding cartoons due to their limited proficiency in English. PT3 and PT10 highlighted that many learners come from IsiXhosa-speaking communities where English is not often used outside school. This aligns with research that found that second-language learners often struggle with visual texts due to linguistic barriers.³³ Cartoons often contain informal, idiomatic, and culturally embedded language, making it even more challenging for non-native speakers to analyze them effectively.³⁴

Furthermore, PT7 noted that learners often failed to interpret cartoon questions correctly because they did not fully understand the instructions. There is a direct link between language proficiency and

³⁰ Dewi et al., "Development of Cartoon Art Learning Media (CALM) to Improve Children's Conflict Resolution Skill."

³¹ Pillay and Govender, "Exploring the Quality of Pre-Service Teachers' Critical Analysis of Cartoons within Environmental Contexts in the Life Sciences."

³² Rawan, Dar, and Siraj, "Televised Cartoons and Incidental Learning of Foreign Language among Children: A Case Study of Doraemon Cartoon in Pakistan."

³³ Naylor, Keogh, and Downing, "Argumentation and Primary Science."

³⁴ Kabapınar, "Effectiveness of Teaching via Concept Cartoons from the Point of View of Constructivist Approach."

learners' ability to analyze visual texts. In the Eastern Cape, where English is the LoLT, but many learners are primarily exposed to IsiXhosa at home, the struggle to comprehend English cartoons significantly impedes assessment performance. The constructivist perspective of Learners requires scaffolding to bridge this gap.³⁵ Teachers play a crucial role in guiding learners through complex texts and gradually reducing assistance until learners can independently analyze cartoons.³⁶

The reflections from pre-service teachers also revealed that learners often did not follow assessment instructions when analyzing cartoons. PT4 and PT5 noted that learners ignored directives, such as “refer to frame 1” and instead responded arbitrarily. This finding is consistent with existing research emphasizing explicit instruction's role in visual literacy. It is suggested that effective cartoon analysis requires learners to pay close attention to sequencing, body language, and contextual clues, which are often overlooked when instructions are disregarded.³⁷

Additionally, the failure to follow instructions may stem from a lack of prior exposure to cartoon analysis as a structured component of the curriculum. Studies have shown that inconsistencies in the CAPS in South Africa result in limited time allocated for visual literacy.³⁸ As a result, learners do not develop the habit of systematically analyzing cartoon frames, leading to poor comprehension and weak assessment performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to improve cartoon teaching in rural schools. Firstly, addressing the resource gap is critical. Integrating digital tools could significantly improve learner engagement and comprehension, even in limited capacities. Previous research suggests that access to digital cartoons and interactive learning platforms can foster a more engaging learning environment.

Secondly, language support mechanisms should be implemented to help learners overcome English language barriers. Scaffolding techniques, such as bilingual instruction and contextualized explanations, could be incorporated to aid in comprehension. Furthermore, explicitly teaching cartoon-related vocabulary and idiomatic expressions could equip learners with the linguistic tools for effective analysis.

Lastly, training pre-service teachers on instructional strategies for teaching cartoons is essential. The findings suggest that learners' inability to follow instructions may be due to inadequate prior exposure. Educators should employ step-by-step guided practice in cartoon analysis to cultivate learners' ability to critically analyze visual texts. By doing so, teachers can gradually develop learners' competence in understanding and responding to cartoon-based assessments.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the study's findings reinforce that cartoons have significant potential as educational tools. However, resource limitations, language barriers, and learners' struggles with following instructions hinder their effectiveness in rural Eastern Cape schools. These challenges underscore the importance of improving access to digital resources, providing language support, and improving instructional strategies for cartoon analysis. Addressing these issues could improve learners' engagement with visual literacy and improve their performance in EFAL assessments.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pre-service teachers are acknowledged for participating in the study, and the Department of Education is sincerely thanked for consenting to access schools for data collection. Walter Sisulu University's Research Directorate is also appreciated because they have put policies in place for paper writing capacity and provision of funding for publication of our manuscripts.

³⁵ Vygotsky and Cole, *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes*.

³⁶ Lasmawan and Budiarta, “Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and the Students' Progress in Learning (A Heutagogical Bibliographical Review).”

³⁷ Dewi et al., “Development of Cartoon Art Learning Media (CALM) to Improve Children's Conflict Resolution Skill.”

³⁸ Department of Basic Education Eastern Cape, “NSC Chief Marker's Report 2023. Examinations and Assessment Chief Directorate.”

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ABOUT AUTHORS

Lundi Nomlala holds a doctoral degree in Language Education. He is lecturing at Walter Sisulu University in the Faculty of Education, Humanities and Creative Arts Education Department. He lectures English for the Bachelor of Education Senior Phase and FET students majoring in languages. He has successfully supervised six Bachelor of Education honours students and is supervising three Master's students. His research interests are language education, school leadership and management, and higher education studies.

Nomasomi Hilda Matiso graduated from Walter Sisulu University in South Africa with a doctorate in education. Additionally, she holds a Master of Arts (MA) in Linguistics, Phonetics and Phonology, Grammar and Usage, and Morphology and Syntax. She is enthusiastic about creating pedagogies for English language teaching and learning, especially the text-based approach, and teaches curriculum studies in English. She has written, co-written, and published articles in both national and international journals.